

Fred Murray

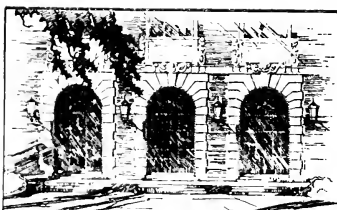
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W. H. Burnaby

THE LAST WORK OF COLONEL BURNABY.

OUR RADICALS.

A Tale of Love and Politics.

BY

FRED. BURNABY.

EDITED, WITH PREFACE,

BY

His Private Secretary,

J. PERCIVAL HUGHES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.



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OUR RADICALS.

CHAPTER I.

ALL the Members of the Cabinet assembled at the council-meeting held in the Foreign Office.

The Prime Minister, accompanied by Lord O'Hagan Harton and Lord Hartigig, were the first to arrive. Mr. Buttertongue and Sir Charles Able, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had later on put in an appearance. Sir Charles was the only man in the Cabinet who was respected by friends and foes alike. From his singular talents and undoubted veracity,

he ought certainly to have been Prime Minister. An advanced Radical, he was yet a patriot in the truest sense of the word, and it bitterly mortified him to feel that the party to which he belonged had carried out policies at home and abroad so utterly contrary to his own ideas. However, much as he was opposed to the principles of his colleagues, he would not give in his resignation, lest he should be the first to break up the party. He could have been a member of the Coalition Government had he wished, but, sore as the temptation had been, he had nevertheless stood firm to his side.

‘I think we are all assembled,’ observed the Prime Minister, looking round. ‘Let me see, Mr. Steadyfile and Lord Camberwell are not here.’

In a few minutes the Earl of Camberwell and Mr. Steadyfile entered the room.

‘Capital!’ said Mr. Cumbermore; ‘and now to business.’

Later on the Prime Minister said :

‘ It would be fatal to our party to dissolve at the present time.’

‘ There can be no doubt about that,’ said Mr. Steadyfile.

‘ We must remain in office at all hazards,’ said Sir Poplar Burlyman.

‘ Now with reference to Lord Cromer,’ said the Prime Minister. ‘ You have heard the reports, which are unfortunately too well founded. Here is a copy of the speech he is said to have made, and it justifies me in having his lordship arrested on a charge of high treason.’

‘ Certainly,’ said Sir Poplar Burlyman ; ‘ but who is to arrest him ? His position is strong.’

‘ Metrale will see that it is done,’ answered Mr. Cumbermore, ‘ and I am sure that you are all agreed as to the advisability of the thing.’

No dissenting voice being heard, the Prime Minister continued :

‘ Our troops have again been defeated in Ireland ; we must remember that it will be impossible to conceal that fact from the public many more hours. When it is announced, there will be terrible excitement in the City and throughout the country.’

‘ Have you full particulars ?’ said Sir Poplar Burlyman.

‘ The details at present are as follow : Lord Saxborough, in whom we placed implicit confidence, encountered the rebels near Tallaght. Saxborough’s despatch says that all went well at the commencement of the engagement ; but after a time two of his Irish regiments, that had been sent to support an attack on the enemy’s left, suddenly deserted. Seeing this, he despatched two cavalry regiments with orders to attack the American contingent from the

rear, as their General had neglected to support his left wing. Our cavalry had nearly succeeded in effecting this movement, when they were assailed by an overpowering number of the rebels, and prevented from carrying out their orders. The day would have been ours, had Lord Saxborough had one more regiment at his command ; but the loss of the 21st Dragoon Guards turned the scale in the Fenians' favour, and he had to retire, leaving Dublin in the possession of the rebel forces. He has entrenched himself at the mouth of the Tunnel, and if we can only supply him with reinforcements he is confident of ultimate success. Our losses are heavy, but the actual number is unknown at present. The enemy suffered terribly, but their force is still great in numbers. At present,' continued the Prime Minister, ' Lord Saxborough must remain quiet, for

every man I can rely upon will be required to defend London should Lord Cromer advance.'

'Do not let any more go at present,' said Lord O'Hagan Harton; 'we must be protected.'

'If it were not for the strong public feeling in England, I should say let the United States annex Ireland,' remarked Sir Poplar Burlyman.

'That is all very well,' said Mr. Steadyfile; 'but what a cry there would be from people who have property there!'

'Property be d——d!' said Sir Poplar Burlyman.

'So it is nearly,' said Lord Camberwell.

'What is this trickling from the ceiling?' said the Lord Chancellor, as some liquid fell upon his hand; 'it is not water!'

He shook the drops from his hand into the fire, and it was at once clear that the

liquid was of an inflammable nature. Going to the door, he called to one of the Under-Secretaries who should have been near at hand. To his surprise there was no one there ; but a fearful scream reached his ear, and rushing to the adjacent room, from whence the cry emanated, he found an unfortunate man in flames. From the ceiling of this room, too, an inflammable liquid was steadily dropping, and the corridor beyond was filled with dense clouds of smoke. It was evident that the building was on fire. Lord O'Hagan Harton would have made his escape at once, had not the only means of retreat, viz. the corridor, been cut off. Returning to the council chamber, he informed his colleagues of the state of affairs. All was confusion and consternation. Each man looked anxiously at his neighbour, as they realized the gravity of the situation.

Sir Charles Able was the only man who retained his presence of mind, and at once proceeded to the corridor to ascertain what means of egress it offered. Returning, he said :

‘The corridor is a mass of flames ; all hope must be abandoned in that direction.’

As he spoke, a crash was heard in the distance.

‘The staircase has fallen !’ said Lord O’Hagan Harton, wringing his hands ; ‘what are we to do ?’

Mr. Cumbermore opened the door, and a vast volume of smoke entered through the aperture.

‘We must keep the door closed,’ said Sir Charles Able. ‘The balcony is our only chance of escape.’

Opening the window, Sir Charles Able walked on to the little parapet, followed by the other Members of the Cabinet. There was not much room for them to stand on

the small enclosure, and they were eighty feet from the ground.

A shout of encouragement arose from the crowd, as they saw the inmates of the building crowd upon the balcony, and it was renewed as a fire-escape arrived upon the scene. It was placed against the building, but it was immediately seen that at least forty feet intervened between its summit and the balcony. Another ladder was attached, but still it was impossible for the prisoners to descend, and the strain of a third would have been too great. At this point Captain Sandford arrived, and at once grasped the situation.

‘It is useless trying to reach them at that altitude,’ he observed.

Arthur Belper had been looking up at the balcony with a view to proposing some means of escape, when he discovered that the people on the parapet were the Members

of the Cabinet. The populace had hitherto not recognised the familiar faces of Mr. Cumbermore's minority ; but immediately the news spread, a revulsion of feeling took place.

‘ Let them burn ! ’ shouted a number of voices ; but the majority, actuated by better feelings, though cherishing the same political hatred towards the sufferers, cried down the inhuman mob.

It was a very critical moment. The floor of the corridor had already given way, and forked tongues of fire were forcing themselves through the lower windows of the building. The heat was overpowering from below ; and from above some molten lead was falling from the roof, some of which had dropped down the neck of the Lord Chancellor, who, yelling with agony and paralyzed with fear, had doubled himself up in one corner of the balcony.

The only man unconcerned for his own personal safety was Sir Charles Able, who, perfectly alive to the dangerous situation, was nevertheless disposed to take the matter philosophically. He had tried everything in life, and had been successful in most of his undertakings. He had, on account of his position—not on account of his abilities—been flattered and fawned upon by women in all sorts and conditions of life. Though he had never loved, he had many times been enslaved, and indeed would never have been in his present pitiable plight, but for the ambitious promptings of a clever woman.

To sum his character up in a few words, he was a splendid animal ; and, looking upon life as a comedy, and the world the stage upon which it was performed, he had begun to tire of the performance, and would have been glad to experience a future

existence, were it only for the sake of trying something new, and escaping from the thralls that bound him to a party absolutely opposed to his innate ideas of justice and order.

By his side stood Mr. Buttertongue, the religious enthusiast, who, with a text in his mouth that nearly choked him, trembled and quaked at his approaching doom. Another crash was heard behind them, and it was seen that the floor of the council chamber had partly fallen through, and the flames from beneath were rushing upwards and nearly touching the windows, which cracked from the excessive heat. Everyone, except Sir Charles Able, moved farther from the window to the edge of the balustrade, thereby doubling the strain on the balcony. The Lord Chancellor, eager to change places with the Prime Minister—who had gained a

temporary advantage over his friend—would have upset all the rest of the members in his efforts, had he not been restrained by the strong arms of Sir Charles Able.

‘If you struggle so, the balcony will give way,’ said Mr. Buttertongue, ‘and we shall be lost.’

‘Keep him back!—keep him back!’ shrieked the Prime Minister and Sir Poplar Burlyman.

‘Be courageous,’ said the Prime Minister a moment afterwards, assuming a virtue he did not possess, as he saw Lord Beckonsbury, the late Prime Minister, in the courtyard below.

Lord Beckonsbury had been passing the Foreign Office in his carriage, when the conflagration was reaching its height, and Belper, who was in command of one engine, had ordered the police to let his

lordship pass through the crowd. On Belper informing him of the state of affairs, his lordship had expressed a hope that some means of escape would be found for them.

Meanwhile, seeing that any other means of rescuing the unfortunate men was out of the question, Captain Sandford had despatched some mounted policemen to procure some strong netting, which he proposed to suspend from the ladders, for the unfortunate Ministers to leap into. The only fear was that the messengers would not return in time to save them.

The heat was becoming unbearable on the balcony. Mr. Buttertongue and Sir Poplar Burlyman had fainted, and Sir Charles Able, who was near to the window, knew that the moment the glass fell out of the frames there was nothing to keep the flames from reaching them.

A deafening cheer arose at that moment from the multitude below. The policemen were returning at full gallop, bearing what appeared to be several gigantic fishing-nets. Sandford had already placed four fire-escapes in the form of a square under the building, and in another moment the more active men of his force were seen climbing the ladders, bearing the corners of the nets in their hands.

‘The strain will be tremendous,’ the chief had said ; ‘attach the nets with every care.’

The sufferers in the window at once discovered Sandford’s design — his last words even had reached their ears, as the chief shouted his orders. They looked at each other with dismay depicted on their countenances.

It seemed a terrible alternative—for at

least fifty feet divided them from their only chance of deliverance.

The people in the court-yard below were breathless with excitement.

‘One at a time!’ shouted the chief, at the top of his voice; ‘one at a time! Jump for your lives!’

The moments were precious, and an ominous crack was heard from the windows at their back, which, in spite of the volumes of water that were being poured into the back of the building to quench the flames, would inevitably give way in a few minutes.

‘Mr. Buttertongue and Sir Poplar Burlyman are insensible,’ said Sir Charles Able; ‘they must be thrown over first.’

Raising these gentlemen by their shoulders and legs, their colleagues lifted them to a level with the balustrade.

‘Over with them!’ shouted the chief,

whose voice was distinctly heard in the painful silence which had fallen on the crowd.

The quick eye of Captain Sandford had discovered a stream of molten lead gradually making its way down the roof of the building. In another five minutes it would be falling in a cascade of fire upon the heads of the unfortunate sufferers.

The determined way in which Sandford repeated his commands had a due effect. Swinging them in the air, and ultimately releasing their hold, the insensible men fell with lightning rapidity into the net—Sir Poplar Burlyman first, and after him Mr. Buttertongue. Firemen were waiting on the rungs of the ladder to release the victims from their position, and with great speed the two Ministers were taken from the net, which had given slightly in the fall, and were being borne down the steps to the excited crowd.

The next to fall was the Prime Minister, who lost his balance, on gaining the top of the balustrade, and nearly paid for it with his life. He was, however, taken out insensible, but unhurt. The others, seeing the good fortune of their colleagues, hastened to follow their example. The last to jump was Sir Charles, who was able to descend the ladder without even the assistance of the firemen.

‘They have to thank you for their lives,’ said Lord Beckonsbury to the Chief of the Fire Brigade, offering his congratulations.

‘I am glad they are safe,’ answered Captain Sandford.

‘Yes,’ replied Lord Beckonsbury ; ‘it will be time enough for them to experience that sort of punishment in the next world.’



CHAPTER II.

THE morning sun gilded the turrets of Cromer Castle. The lord of the mansion had recovered from the effects of the narcotics administered to him by Metrale's agents. A cry for speedy vengeance had been raised by many of his adherents, and some had gone so far as to entreat his lordship to assemble a court-martial to try, and inflict summary punishment upon, the two detectives.

One of the prisoners was Mr. Jumbleton, and when Sir Richard Digby had spoken to him, his fear of never seeing Mrs. Jumbleton again so worked upon his mind

that he consented to give Lord Cromer any information he might want, if his lordship would only spare his life. He had already informed Sir Richard Digby of the Prime Minister's complicity in the plot, and remembering that Captain Belper was Sir Richard's most intimate friend, and that Belper had been to the office several times about Eugene, he thought that he might perhaps influence the Baronet to speak on his behalf, by unfolding what he knew of the mystery attaching to the boy, and the reasons which induced Metrale to be so reticent on this subject to those interested in the lad's parentage. He had already hinted that he knew more about this matter than he cared to tell, and at length, on Sir Richard's promising to intercede with his uncle, he divulged what he knew of Eugene's antecedents.

‘You remember, sir,’ said Jumbleton,

‘on the first occasion Captain Belper came to the chief’s office, he brought a letter of introduction from you?’

‘Well?’

‘Mr. Metrale at once set me and my wife, who is uncommonly clever in these matters, to ferret the matter out. She went straight to Paris, and ingratiated herself with some of the Fenian brotherhood, and eventually learned that the boy was not French by birth, but English; and, moreover, heir to a large property in England. His uncle, in fact, was a peer, and no less a person than Lord Cromer.’

‘What do you say?’ said Sir Richard Digby, with astonishment. ‘Lord Cromer has no nephew but myself, and I have no children, therefore your statement has no truth in it whatever; your wife must have been misinformed.’

‘I am sure you will be convinced she

was right,' said Jumbleton ; ' my wife is a shrewd woman, and she discovered that the original idea of the Fenians was to keep the child in their custody, he being the heir to the estate, and in time, if Lord Cromer in any way interfered with their plans, to inform him of the existence of the child, and threaten to kill him if his lordship refused to act upon their instructions.'

' But Lord Cromer had only two brothers,' said Sir Richard Digby ; ' one who died at twenty-six years of age, unmarried, and my own father, who had but one son.'

' How do you know that Lord Cromer's brother was unmarried ?'

' It was never supposed that he married.'

' But it was a fact,' answered the detective. ' Lord Cromer himself knows very well that his brother contracted a *mésalliance*

with a French actress. He is also aware that a child was born of that union, and that shortly after his birth the child disappeared. All this Lord Cromer knows as well as I do ; but as he believes the child to be dead, and as you are his heir, he has never thought it well to mention the matter to you. The Fenians have constantly corresponded with his lordship, but he has refused to see the child, and affects to disbelieve the whole story. One of these letters from Moonlight Barry, the Fenian chief, contained the information that unless Lord Cromer ceased to denounce the Irish agitators the child would be destroyed by drowning. His lordship ignored the threat, and but for Captain Belper the boy would be to-day in " kingdom come." '

' Why then did Metrale not inform Captain Belper at once of this state of things ?'

‘For the best of reasons,’ replied the detective. ‘He had informed Mr. Cumbermore instead, and the Prime Minister for State purposes preferred to be the sole person aware of the existence of Lord Cromer’s heir. He knew that the child was in safe keeping, and thought that some day he might obtain an advantage over Lord Cromer by telling him that he could point out the real heir to the estates, and supplant the only person his lordship cares one jot or tittle about in the world—that is, yourself.’

‘I can hardly believe it,’ said the Baronet thoughtfully.

‘If you doubt my statement, ask Lord Cromer himself ; you will find, if he speaks the truth, that my words will be corroborated.’

Sir Richard Digby, on leaving Jumbleton, went straight to Lord Cromer’s apartments.

The General was alone with Sir Edward Righton, and they were comparing notes over a map stretched out on the table before them.

‘Ah, it is you, Dick,’ said Lord Cromer, as he heard his nephew’s footsteps. ‘We are making our final arrangements. If it had not been for those two scoundrels, I should have marched upon London three or four days ago.’

‘What news have you from town?’ said Sir Richard; ‘anything satisfactory?’

‘Quite,’ said his lordship. ‘The people are becoming more dissatisfied every day with the Government; Downing Street has been set on fire, and Cumbermore and his colleagues nearly perished in the flames.’

‘That was undoubtedly the work of the Fenians,’ said Sir Edward Righton.

‘Yes, they may have had a finger in the

fire,' said Lord Cromer, his face darkening the while. 'These scoundrels are capable of any atrocity.'

'The Prime Minister escaped, then?' said Digby.

'Yes : here is the account—read it. I see a friend of yours, Captain Belper, distinguished himself.'

Sir Richard Digby sat down to read the account of the fire, while the two Generals continued studying the map.

'The effect of marching from four different points on the City will be to completely paralyze the action of our opponents. My spies tell me that Metrale's plan is to march out of London and invite an attack, hoping that the Volunteers, of whose courage he has but a poor opinion, will be awed by the sight of his myrmidons of the law. He will be powerless when he hears we are marching from four points, and he

will have to divide his force if he wishes to keep us out of London.'

'The troops in Ireland have been defeated again, I see,' said Sir Richard Digby. 'They have fallen back on their original position at the mouth of the Tunnel.'

'Ten thousand more Volunteers are on their way to join us,' observed Sir Edward Righton.

'Yes,' said Lord Cromer; 'I expect to have a force of nearly 80,000 men with me when I begin my march.'

Shortly after this Sir Edward Righton left the Castle, to inspect the arrangements made for the reception of the expected corps of Volunteers, and Lord Cromer was left alone with his nephew.

Sir Richard had only affected an interest in the paper he was holding before him; in reality, his mind was engrossed with the revelations the detective had made to him.

‘ You are looking ill, Dick,’ said Lord Cromer anxiously.

‘ I am fairly well,’ replied Sir Richard ; ‘ but I have just had some information imparted to me by one of the prisoners, and it has quite upset me.’

‘ What about ?’

‘ About the child who was lost in Paris, some thirteen years ago, but who now, it appears, is alive and well.’

Lord Cromer started at this sudden announcement, and turned pale. The conversation had taken a turn he had not anticipated.

‘ I wish to be frank with you,’ continued Sir Richard, looking his uncle steadfastly in the face. ‘ Is the story true or false ? Had my uncle Henry a son ?’

Lord Cromer hesitated a moment, then, seeing that his nephew was determined to have an answer, he spoke :

‘ It is a pity that all the scandal Henry created in the family could not have been buried with him ; but you ask a plain question, and I will not conceal facts from you. My brother Henry’s wife had a child—whether he was Henry’s son or not, God only knows ; anyhow, my brother did not deny his paternity.’

‘ And the boy disappeared ?’

‘ Yes, suddenly one evening, when out with his nurse on the Boulevards. Woman and child disappeared, and I had hoped never to return, for my affections were always set upon you, and I wished you to be my heir.’

Lord Cromer rang the bell, and ordered the detective to be brought before him.

Mr. Jumbleton repeated his statement ; and even assured Lord Cromer that the account of the child’s abduction, the name

of the woman who had abducted him, and every fact connected with the case, was registered in a book in Mr. Metrale's possession.

Nothing more could be learnt from the prisoner, and, ordering him back to his cell, Lord Cromer was once more alone with his nephew.

‘And so your friend Belper saved the boy's life?’

‘Yes; and the lad is still with him.’

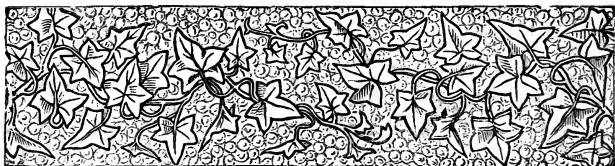
‘It cannot be true—it cannot be true!’ said Lord Cromer; ‘there must be some treachery at work. If the worst comes to the worst,’ he continued, ‘and Henry's ill-begotten son is to be heir to Cromer Castle, not one farthing of my funded money shall he have; and every tree that grows on this land shall be cut down, and turned into money for you.’

The peer took his nephew's hand

affectionately, and, sinking into a chair, covered his face with his hands.

Digby saw that Lord Cromer wished to remain undisturbed, and, with one compassionate glance, he turned and left the room.





CHAPTER III.

‘**S**O they are really not much the worse after the fire,’ said Laura Tryington to Captain Belper ; ‘and you behaved so nobly ! Do you know, Captain Belper, you are my ideal of a hero !’

‘ Really, Miss Tryington ; then I should recommend you to elevate the standard of your ideals. But where is your cousin this morning ?’

‘ I suppose, as she dwells in a Hermitage,’ said Laura Tryington contemptuously, ‘ she wishes to be considered a recluse.’

Hermitage was a picturesque residence at Wimbledon that Lady Tryington had

taken for a short time. It was an old-fashioned building—probably of the time of Queen Anne—and the large grounds surrounding it were thickly planted with fine old oaks.

Blanche, whose health was still very indifferent, had felt the benefit of the change ; and Dr. Planselle, who attended her, opined that with time and rest she would become convalescent.

Arthur Belper was a frequent visitor at the Hermitage.

He would ride over to Wimbledon, and spend two or three hours with Lady Tryington and her nieces, entertaining them with military and political news, which he had derived from official sources. In return, Laura would play her favourite pieces to him, upon a fine Erard ; and Blanche would sing, with a feeling that could not fail to touch the listener,

some quaint old English and German ballads.

Here, then, was a grand field for Lady Tryington to exercise her talents as a match-maker. Belper, however, divided his attentions so fairly between her two nieces, that it was very difficult to say for which of the two he had a predilection. One day she thought Laura was the favoured one, because he talked more to her than to her cousin ; but the care and the reverence which he threw into the most trifling attention paid to Blanche left it in Lady Tryington's mind a perfectly open question.

Laura was greatly piqued at the conduct of the young officer ; and Lady Tryington herself was becoming indignant at what she considered to be trifling with the affections of her nieces. Would it not be prudent to discourage his presence at the

Hermitage? This she would undoubtedly have done, but for the fact that in a few days he would be leaving Wimbledon, and perhaps in that time he might declare his intentions.

Arthur Belper was absolutely ignorant of Sir Richard Digby's movements—no news having reached London of the Baronet's adherence to Lord Cromer. In fact, Belper, urged thereto by the Prime Minister and other influential gentlemen, had almost committed himself to use his services against the proposed invasion.

Mr. Cumbermore, who had learned from private sources that the idea of placing nets to release the Cabinet Ministers from their perilous position on the night of the fire had emanated from the fertile brain of the young Captain of Dragoons and not from Mr. Sandford's, had lost no opportunity of

showing Belper how much he appreciated his services.

‘Will Mr. Metrale’s police ever make good soldiers?’ inquired Laura Tryington. ‘They are splendid men to look at ; but will you be able to teach them to hit a target?’

‘That is the difficulty,’ replied Arthur. ‘As you saw yesterday when we rode over to the butts, they are very indifferent marksmen.’

‘I am a fair shot myself,’ said Laura, ‘and would certainly enlist under your banner, Captain Belper.’

‘She certainly is a good sportsman,’ said Lady Tryington, joining them as they sat by the piano. ‘She used to go out salmon-fishing every morning last year, and very well she looked in her Highland costume.’ And Lady Tryington cast an approving glance at her niece.

‘I hope Digby will ask us again to his property in Scotland,’ continued Laura Tryington, addressing Captain Belper. ‘I never enjoyed myself so much anywhere, except on the yacht after you came.’

‘Lady Tryington, will you allow me to take places for you and your nieces to-morrow at a field-day at Wimbledon? Metrale is going to parade his entire force, in number about 18,000.’

‘I suppose Mr. Cumbermore will be there?’ said Lady Tryington evasively.

‘Yes,’ answered Captain Belper; ‘and all the Cabinet Ministers.’

‘Here is Blanche,’ said Lady Tryington. ‘If she is well enough to accompany us, I shall be delighted.’

To Laura Tryington’s great annoyance, Blanche accepted the invitation, and it was arranged that the two young ladies should ride to the common about three o’clock on

the next day, and that Lady Tryington should witness the march past from her carriage.

‘I had no idea you cared about reviews,’ said Laura, sarcastically, to her cousin.

‘I have never seen one,’ was the reply, ‘and I am curious to see what it is like.’

‘Have you heard from Digby lately?’ said Arthur, after a pause. ‘It is two or three weeks since he was in town.’

A servant entered before Lady Tryington could reply, with a letter for Captain Belper.

‘It is from the very man I was speaking of,’ said Arthur, glancing at the handwriting.

‘Open it,’ said Lady Tryington. ‘It may contain some interesting news for us all.’

The letter was not a long one—Digby’s never were. From it Arthur learnt for

the first time that his friend had joined Lord Cromer, and that in a very short time they would march upon London, and force the Government to dissolve Parliament. Digby concluded by asking Arthur to join them at Meltingborough Castle.

‘He is too late in the field,’ said Arthur. ‘Cumbermore has been very kind to me, and I must keep my word to him.’

‘Even if your conscience were to tell you that he is wrong, and Lord Cromer is right,’ suggested Blanche.

‘Soldiers ought never to indulge in a conscience, I should think,’ said Laura. ‘They should obey the powers that be.’

‘Well,’ said Arthur, ‘Mr. Cumbermore is the Sovereign’s Prime Minister, and so long as the Sovereign does not order me to do otherwise, I shall obey his Government, much as I regret being in opposition to my old friend.’

‘It would be horrible if you were to come into collision,’ said Lady Tryington. ‘It is horrible enough to realize that we are on the eve of a civil war, and at the end of the nineteenth century.’

‘Men, I suppose, love fighting for the excitement it produces,’ said Blanche; ‘but I sympathize in this case with Lord Cromer.’

Arthur made no answer, but this remark, coming from one usually so quiet and reserved, struck him forcibly.

Laura was delighted at the opportunity afforded her of taking up the cudgels for Captain Belper.

‘I am afraid I am prejudiced,’ said Blanche, ‘against Mr. Cumbermore, who, in my opinion, seeks only his self-aggrandizement, and cares little for the welfare of his country.’

Again Arthur kept silence; but as he was

riding back from Wimbledon, with Eugene by his side, the boy wondered what could have made his deliverer so thoughtful. Arthur was thinking of what Blanche Tryington had said, and wondering in himself how powerful was the influence over a man of the woman he loved.

‘And it would not be love,’ he murmured, ‘if it had not the power to make us think right wrong, and wrong right.’





CHAPTER IV.

GREAT annoyance had been caused to the Fenians in London by the failure of the plot to destroy the members of the Cabinet assembled in the Foreign Office. It had, moreover, resulted in the arrest of Mike, Moonlight Barry's lieutenant.

The conspirators feared that their agent had been induced to divulge some of the secrets of the brotherhood ; orders therefore had been given to change the place of meeting, and Barry had bought a small trading vessel which was lying in the docks. He had given out that this ship

would shortly sail for the West Indies, and that he was awaiting cargo.

The members of the secret society, under the guise of sailors, assembled on board, and there considered what step they should next take to vitally injure Mr. Cumbermore and his Government. Barry had learnt that it was the intention of the Government to withdraw the troops from Ireland through the Tunnel. He also knew that the English General in command had determined to fight one more battle before he commenced a retreat. The Fenian head-centre had, moreover, discovered that all the supplies and ammunition for the army in Ireland were transmitted through the Tunnel. If this means of communication could be destroyed, Barry thought that the English troops would be at the mercy of the Irish national army and their allies. He was aware that Lord

Cromer and his Volunteers had resolved to march upon London ; but, owing to the difficulties the General had experienced in organizing his commissariat, it was thought that some time must yet elapse before he could commence a forward movement. Hence, for the moment, he need not, according to Barry's calculations, be considered an actor on the scene.

It appeared to Barry that the moment was ripe for action on the part of himself and his conspirators. With this idea in view, he convened a meeting of the chief centres of his party on board the trading vessel. One by one they assembled on the boat, Metrale's agents little thinking, as the sailors passed them, that they were the very men they were in search of.

‘ It will not be necessary for me to detain you long,’ said Barry to his accomplices ; ‘ I wish to speak with you of a plan I have

in contemplation. It is to destroy this end of the Irish Channel Tunnel, and thus cut off all supplies and reinforcements from reaching the troops in Ireland. There are several ways of carrying out this idea, but all of them are difficult to execute, on account of the watch kept on our movements in this country. I have sent for you, hoping that some of you may be able to devise a plan for reaching the object I have in view.'

A murmur of satisfaction followed the speech of the chief, and a long silence ensued, broken at length by the voice of Maggie.

'Could not some dynamite be prepared as coal, and placed on one of the engines? This exploding, say half-way across the sea, would probably destroy the Tunnel.'

'I have thought of that,' said Metrale; 'but it is open to objection. The Tunnel is

several hundred feet below the sea, and great as the explosion would be, it would not in all probability have the desired effect.'

'Would it not be possible for us to undermine this end of the Tunnel?' suggested one of the conspirators.

'The process would be too tedious,' said Barry.

'I have a suggestion to make,' said a short, thickset man, who some years before had been well-known as an influential Home Ruler at Westminster. His attendance at the meetings was very rare, but he was supposed to have even greater influence than Barry with the conspirators.

'You know the forts that have been erected at a considerable expense,' continued Sullivan, 'at the mouth of the Tunnel.'

'Yes,' replied Barry.

‘In one of these forts there are wires connected with mines beneath the submarine railway. These mines were laid several years ago at the instance of Lord Cromer, who was from the first opposed to the idea of the Channel Tunnel, but who, seeing that all his warnings were of no avail, endeavoured, and successfully too, to neutralize the danger to his country in the way I have mentioned.’

‘But I do not see how that is to help us,’ said Barry; ‘the wires are in the fort, and to destroy the Tunnel we must first obtain access to the battery. The forts are some distance from the sea, and carefully guarded day and night.’

‘It is not necessary to enter the fort at all,’ replied Sullivan. ‘The wires run from the fortifications to the Tunnel, passing underneath a coastguardsman’s house. One of us might replace this man, or put

him out of the way, and then dig down to the wires, and connect them with one of our own batteries, and thus destroy the submarine passage.'

The conspirators looked at each other at the conclusion of Sullivan's remarks, and from the murmurs of satisfaction, it was evident that the idea was received with some favour.

'Three would be sufficient to undertake the business,' continued Sullivan; 'more would create suspicion. I will take the lead in the matter, and with Maggie's assistance I have every hope of success.'

'We had better meet once more to mature our plans,' said Moonlight Barry, 'and then let the blow be struck at once.'

Arrangements having been made for another meeting, the conspirators withdrew, Maggie remaining on deck with the chief to take some further instructions.

‘Have you seen Eugene lately?’ Barry said, when they were alone.

‘Yes; he is still in Belper’s care, and appears to be devoted to him.’

‘Our threat to destroy the boy had no effect on Lord Cromer; he does not seem to care for his heir.’

‘His affections are set on Sir Richard Digby,’ said Maggie.

‘Well, for the present it will be best to leave the boy alone, so long as we can put our hand upon him if necessary. How go matters at Meltingborough?’

‘Well, his force is continually increasing; the last account states that he has more than enough men to take London.’

‘And reconquer Ireland,’ added Barry between his teeth. ‘Lord Cromer must die.’

‘What!’ exclaimed Maggie; ‘you would not propose his assassination!’

‘ I would.’

‘ It would be dangerous and useless,’ said Maggie. ‘ Digby, his nephew, who is quite as able a man, would take up the cause. If you wish to do any good, you must kill them both.’

‘ I know, I know,’ murmured the chief. ‘ Would you undertake the business ?’

‘ For God’s sake, Barry, don’t ask me !’ cried Maggie, trembling and turning pale. ‘ I have done enough.’

‘ We are fighting a war of independence,’ said Barry encouragingly. ‘ Our enemy has the advantage of wealth and numbers. It is for your country that you do these things, and for that cause you will take in hand the assassination of Cromer and Digby. Besides, you must obey ; you are in our power.’

‘ You do not think to terrify me by this

threat, do you?' said Maggie haughtily. 'I should have thought you knew me too well by this time to imagine for a moment that I fear either your threats or death itself.'

'No, no—no, no!' said Barry hurriedly; 'your courage and zeal have been too often proved for me to doubt you, and for that reason I ask you to rid us of these two enemies.'

'Reflect,' he continued, after a pause; 'should Cromer live to carry out his projects, England will hold up her head once more. England only requires a determined man at the head of her affairs to rule her as a dictator: Cromer is just such a man. He could reconquer not only Ireland, but all her lost possessions. Now there are only two men capable of making a *coup d'état* in this country. The one, Lord Cromer, who has dreamed of the dictator-

ship for years past. The other, Sir Richard Digby, who has talent enough, but no energy. These men, as you know, have the Volunteers at their feet ; and the day they enter London and dethrone Cumberland, they strike at the same time a death-blow to our cause.'

'Do you ask me at once to attempt the lives of these officers ?' said Maggie.

'Not immediately ; three weeks must elapse before Lord Cromer can move his force. The English General in Ireland will not return for some time, as he is hoping that our people will make an attack upon his entrenchments. For the present we are safe, and you can assist Sullivan ; but when the Tunnel is destroyed, and the British troops are cut off from England, then I commit Lord Cromer and his nephew to your charge.'

Maggie left the vessel without a

further reply to Moonlight Barry's proposal, and, walking through the docks unsuspected, entered the heart of the mighty City.





CHAPTER V.

MEANTIME, in London, as in the days just preceding the invasion of Rome by the barbarians, all was revelry and mirth. Governments might come in or go out ; what signified it to the rich and luxurious inhabitants ? Even the day appointed for the review of Metrale's forces was a signal for amusement, and the roads to Wimbledon were crowded with troops marching to the rendezvous, and carriages containing people eager to see the spectacle. The members of the Alcibiades Club had even forsaken their comfortable lounges for the jolting

drags that were to take them to the scene. They were curious to learn the amount of physical exertion that it would be necessary for them to undergo, should they, as it had been rumoured, be compelled to take up arms against Lord Cromer. Ricardius and Wild Thyne were among the number ; the latter, too old to serve himself, being much amused at the alarm of his companions.

‘What are you thinking about?’ said Wild Thyne to Ricardius.

‘I was wondering,’ answered his friend, with a languid smile, ‘what will happen to London ten years hence.’

‘Don’t consider such questions,’ said Wild Thyne ; ‘it is really too hot for such reflections. Of course everything will belong to the people, and you and I will be in the workhouse.’

‘Well, we shall have our own society, at any rate,’ said Ricardius.

The carriage halted for a moment, as they were near Wimbledon and in a string of vehicles which extended for nearly a mile. A favourable position had been reserved for Mr. Cumbermore and his friends. Belper had obtained an order to admit Lady Tryington's carriage into this enclosure, and Wild Thyne and Ricardius were among the favoured few. Lady Tryington was delighted to find, on looking around, that many of her most intimate and influential friends had been unable to obtain a place in this particular position, and her opinion of Belper grew immensely when she considered that it was to him she owed this advantage of being an object of envy to many of her dear friends.

Horace Deloony and Mrs. Ryder, who were conversing together, on recognising Lady Tryington at once approached her carriage. They had been unable to obtain

admission to the enclosure, but could speak to her over the railing.

‘So glad to see you, dear Mrs. Ryder,’ said Lady Tryington, reaching forward to shake the hand of the editor’s wife—‘and you too, Horace ; it is some time since we met.’

‘I called at your house only last week,’ said Mrs. Ryder, ‘but a strange servant told me you had gone abroad.’

‘Yes,’ added Deloony, ‘too bad of you, really ; and to take your charming nieces away.’

‘Have you not heard of our adventures at sea ?’ said Lady Tryington.

‘Only some rumours,’ replied Mrs. Ryder, ‘but do tell me the whole story.’

‘What a pity it is you are not in the enclosure !’ said Lady Tryington, inwardly delighted. ‘I should have to scream, so I will tell you another time. Come and lunch

with me at the Hermitage the day after to-morrow.'

'What, have you taken that charming place?' said Mrs. Ryder.

'Yes; I have taken it whilst the yacht is being refitted.'

At that moment Lord O'Hagan Harton approached the carriage, and Lady Tryington turned to greet him.

'How dreadfully old she is looking!' said the editor's wife to Horace Deloony. 'And how she paints! Quite ridiculous at her time of life.'

'But she is a clever woman,' said Horace.

'Yes; her politics are like the Vicar of Bray's religion. She is in with everybody, Conservatives and Radicals; and she holds her own with both.'

'Here is Ryder,' said Deloony.

'Take me to see Colonel Metrale,' whispered Mrs. Ryder to her husband; 'that

horrid Lady Tryington is in the enclosure. He can get me admittance, I should think.'

'If he does not,' said Ryder the editor, 'he shall smart for it in the *Scrawler*.'

With these words, the editor led his wife away, in search of Colonel Metrale.

In the distance they could see Blanche and Laura Tryington riding towards Lady Tryington's carriage, accompanied by Arthur Belper. His men had already taken up a position for marching past, and, as half an hour would elapse before the time appointed for the commencement of the review, the young officer was escorting the ladies about the ground, and pointing out to them the various battalions.

'I would not have missed this for anything,' said Blanche, brushing back from her brow the fair hair which the wind had blown over her face.

'Look at my battalion,' said Arthur, with

a smile of satisfaction ; ‘splendid fellows, are they not ?’

‘Their very appearance should frighten cousin Dick’s rebels into submission,’ said Laura, looking full into Belper’s eyes.

An orderly galloped up, and, making his salute, said :

‘A despatch for Captain Belper.’

‘I am Captain Belper.’ And Arthur read the missive.

‘After the review,’ it ran, ‘march your battalion to London with all speed ; the Fenians are at work upon some mischief. I will join you.’

After leaving the ladies with their aunt, he hurried back to his men.

It was a grand sight to witness those 18,000 newly levied Volunteers march past the little knot of officials.

As the troops arrived near the flag posted

in the centre of the ground, the illustrious gentlemen moved forward to receive the salute.

Metrale rode past at the head of the division, his cocked-hat and black cut-away tunic made more conspicuous by reason of the white charger he bestrode.

Battalion after battalion passed the enclosure, the last to arrive being Belper's men, whose splendid appearance elicited many complimentary remarks from the spectators.

'They may march with the steadiness of a wall,' said Wild Thyne; 'but the thing we want in a soldier is for him to shoot well. Cromer's Volunteers will pick them out long before their physical superiority can come into play.'

The review was over, and Belper rode some little distance beside Lady Tryington's carriage, occasionally turning to con-

verse with Blanche, who rode with her cousin behind.

‘ Ah,’ said Wild Thyne, as he rode past, ‘ he will lose that five hundred !’

‘ Think so ?’ said Ricardius. ‘ The lily or the rose ? The blonde or the brunette ?’

‘ The lily and the blonde, of course !’ replied Wild Thyne. ‘ Do you not see how he devotes himself to Blanche, and how mad the other one is ?’

‘ Poor thing !’ said Ricardius, leaning back against a cushion ; ‘ he is to be pitied if he marries.’

‘ Pitied !’ said Wild Thyne, ‘ I should think so ! Men are loved for their rank, their money, and sometimes their looks—never for themselves. Faugh ! women are hypocrites ever !’ added the old cynic.

‘ Yes,’ said Ricardius ; ‘ women are like flowers—pretty to look at ; but their beauty

fades directly you pluck them. Poor devil !'

This final exclamation referred undoubtedly to Belper, and was repeated many times during the drive from Wimbledon to the doors of the Alcibiades Club.





CHAPTER VI.

SULLIVAN and his accomplices had not waited long in London after it had been decided by the Fenian Brotherhood that an attempt should be made to blow up the Irish Channel Tunnel. Soon after the final meeting, they were travelling in a first-class carriage from London to Holyhead.

‘It cost a terrible lot of money to make,’ observed Lambourne, one of the conspirators.

‘Some millions!’ was the reply. ‘When it was first started, the Directors said it would only cost a comparatively small sum ;

but the water came in on several occasions, and they found the amount of expenditure pretty heavy at the end. It was a regular job to make money on the part of the Directors—like many other companies in England. Talk about the acts of the Fenians! why, what we do is nothing compared with the ruin which these speculating companies bring upon many of their countrymen; and they will even endanger their own country to turn a few pounds over for themselves. In society, what is more despicable than selling children to the highest bidder? And yet one sees that every season, and men bet on it, and women's lives are made wretched by it. Money! money! money! These Saxons would sell their souls for it.'

'Well,' said an American Fenian, 'in the States people don't despise the dollar, I bet.'

‘ Perhaps not ; but there is far more true patriotism in America than in England.’

Maggie sat back in the carriage, taking little heed of the conversation of her friends. She was thinking of the orders she had received to assassinate Lord Cromer and Sir Richard Digby.

Where had she seen Sir Richard Digby before she met him on the yacht ? There had been something in his face which recalled to her memory the features of one whom she had known in her earlier life. But she could never collect the links, and in despair she turned her thoughts again to the work before her.

It was a windy night, and the rain beat violently against the windows. The Fenians arrived at their destination, and Sullivan at once proceeded with his companions to a small roadside inn, called the Shamrock. The Shamrock was a very

respectable hostelry, and although a favourite resort for Irishmen, it had never given any cause for anxiety or vigilance on the part of the police. The Irish in the locality were a well-behaved body of men. They had most of them been employed in the construction of the Tunnel, and had remained there after its completion, having found comfortable homes in the neighbourhood. Being an honest class of men themselves, they had not returned to their country, owing to the absence of law and order there, and the unsuppressed crusade against property in all parts of that rebellious island. It had commenced by an ignorant class of tenants refusing to pay their rents to the landlords, in which illegal course they were supported by intelligent traitors, who were even allowed to hold seats at Westminster. Mr. Cumbermore and his colleagues refused to

employ martial law, even when murders were committed throughout the land, and this because, in Meltingborough and other large towns, there were thousands of Irish electors who gave their vote to the Radical interest, and who would withdraw it if a straightforward and manly policy were substituted for the vacillating measures of which they approved. It was an interesting study for the disinterested observer. Continental statesmen viewed it with incredulous astonishment. The reign of terror in Paris in the last century was surpassed in horrors by that now inaugurated in Ireland. Yet the people of England did nothing. They ate, they drank, they smoked, they slept, and were indifferent to all the murder and confiscation of property going on around them.

The host of the Shamrock was on very

friendly terms with all the Irish who patronized his house.

In spite of the early hour, he was standing at the door of his inn, his hands thrust to the bottom of his capacious pockets.

‘What, up before the sun, Patrick?’ said Sullivan to him, at the same time cordially shaking his hand. ‘My friends, Patrick,’ he added, introducing the conspirators.

Mr. Patrick Whiler nodded his head with a sign of recognition.

‘What can Sullivan and his party want at Holyhead?’ thought the landlord, as he showed them to their rooms.

His wife, to whom he returned, was asking herself the same question, for she had some experience of secret societies, and she knew that Sullivan was an important member of the chief centre.

Sullivan did not let the grass grow

under his feet, but before an hour had elapsed he was on his way to the scene of their future action. He halted about half a mile from the fortifications, and within a hundred yards of a coastguardsman's house. There was a small plantation adjoining the road which led to this building. After looking round to see that he was unobserved, the Fenian jumped over the hedge which divided him from the enclosure, and advancing to the edge of the copse, looked intently at the cottage. Drawing a pair of field-glasses from his pocket, he submitted the building to the minutest investigation. A woman came to the threshold, apparently intent upon some domestic duty. From her appearance, Sullivan judged that she was the coastguardsman's wife. A few minutes later Sullivan observed a man dressed in a pilot's jacket, and wearing a

sailor's hat, approach the dwelling, and two boys rushed forward to meet him.

‘Evidently that is our man,’ said Sullivan, as he watched him enter the cottage ; ‘and not a very formidable fellow to encounter. But now to see what other inmates there are.’

Taking off his closely-buttoned cloak, Sullivan appeared in a sailor's jersey, and substituting a slouch hat for the one he wore, his resemblance to a seafarer was complete. Leaving his other garments in the wood, he approached the cottage. No one hearing the sound of his footsteps as he reached the entrance, he tapped lightly at the door.

‘What ho, there!’ shouted a voice from within, and the coastguardsman coming forward, scanned the features of the new arrival.

‘What do you want?’

‘I have not eaten a crust since yesterday morning,’ said the seafarer, with that whining tone so often heard amongst the peasantry of Ireland.

‘Give the poor creature something,’ said a voice from within.

‘Come in, then,’ said the coastguardsman ; ‘come in. Maybe she will find you a cup of milk and a hunch of bread.’

Sullivan expressed his thanks, and entered the dwelling, following his benefactor into the little parlour, which served as kitchen and dining-room.

‘There,’ said the housewife, ‘eat and be thankful.’

‘Yes,’ said the coastguardsman ; ‘work’s difficult to get, mate, and when you’ve got it, it’s very hard. Here am I up at all hours, and getting only eighteen shillings a week, for preventing hundreds of men from escaping the Custom House officers.

And if I only shut one eye sometimes, and let them land their cargoes, I might get as many pounds as I do shillings.'

'Yes,' said his wife; 'but then you are an honest man, and I am prouder to be your wife and share your poverty, than walk in silks and satins and live in terror of detection.'

'All very well, my dear; but how are we to start the boys in life on honesty?'

The Fenian sat listening to the conversation, and eagerly devouring the meal that had been placed before him.

'Ah! I know what suffering is,' he said at length; 'but I am going to Holyhead with the hope of good luck. A relation of mine has landed there, and he has made a power of money in foreign parts. If I get what I expect, you shall not be forgotten.'

Leaving the cottage, he stayed one minute in the copse to change his attire

once more, and then returned to his friends.

‘I have done well,’ he said to the Fenians, whom he found gathered round a table smoking and drinking. ‘The coastguardsman and his family occupy the cottage on the cliff, and I do not think it will even be necessary to use force.’

‘Then how will you settle the matter?’ inquired Maggie.

‘My idea is this. I have told this man that I am expecting to meet a relation in Holyhead. You, Lambourne, can personate my uncle; and you, Maggie, his niece. To-morrow we can hire a carriage, and drive in the direction of the Tunnel. I will then take you into the cottage, and you can thank the people for their kindness to me, and invite them to pay you a visit on board your brig. The chief has rented a small one, as you know, and it is manned by our

friends. They will receive the whole family on board, and I shall return with Maggie to the cottage.'

'But how are we to explain matters to the people here?' said Maggie, who looked very sceptical as to the wisdom of such a course.

'We must announce our departure for London,' said Sullivan. 'Take tickets, and get out at the next station. Then walk to the brig and sleep on ^{board} ~~deck~~. There we shall be more independent. The people here, I know, are not to be trusted.'

'You need fear nothing from me!' exclaimed a voice suddenly.

The conspirators started. The sound came from the ceiling of the room. On looking up, Sullivan could discern a small hole, which doubtless communicated with the floor above.

'I shall be with you directly, if you will

give me admittance,' continued the voice.

'I am a friend.'

'That is the innkeeper's wife,' said Maggie to the astonished Fenians.

'Damnation !' exclaimed Sullivan ; 'she must have divined our secret.'

'Never mind,' said Maggie. 'She seems a friend, not a foe ; and if she proves the latter——' and here she looked at Lambourne, who made a gesticulation as if he were strangling something between his fingers.

A tap at the door was heard, and Mrs. Whiler, the innkeeper's wife, was admitted. She looked straight at Sullivan, as if she knew him to be the chief of the party, and then glanced round at the other conspirators.

'You have played the spy upon us,' said Sullivan doggedly. 'You may not know the penalty.'

‘Yes, I do,’ answered Mrs. Whiler calmly; ‘but it would not be worth your while to inflict any punishment on me if I can be useful,’ she added; ‘and you probably know I have proved my devotion to the cause by affiliating myself with one of the societies.’

The conspirators consulted together in low tones for a few moments, while Maggie kept her eyes fixed on the resolute countenance of the innkeeper’s wife.

‘We have decided to trust you,’ said Sullivan, at length, ‘and to acquaint you with the details of our plot.’

The chief conspirator then unfolded the method in which they had determined to blow up the Tunnel.

‘It is a good thing you have told me all,’ said Mrs. Whiler, in reply. ‘I know the wife of this coastguardsman, and have often stopped in the cottage.’

‘Have you ever been in the cellar?’ asked Sullivan.

‘Yes ; on several occasions.’

‘Is there a well by the wall at the back of the house ?’

‘I have never noticed it,’ said the woman after a pause ; ‘but there is a board covering something, and probably it is that.’

Sullivan drew from his pocket a plan, and placed it on the table.

‘I received this tracing from one of the affiliates in the Intelligence Department of the Army. He was employed to copy the original plan for the Secretary of State for War, and at the same time he made one for himself. These fools of officials think their servants are to be trusted ; they will find out their mistake when it has cost them the flower of their army. By this plan, the wires from the forts run underneath the cottage, and pass within a few

feet from the bottom of that well. The cottage was originally built for an electrician in the pay of the War Office, and he had the shaft constructed in order to make some experiments with earth currents. It was feared that as the mines below the Tunnel had been charged with dynamite, some earth current might possibly be strong enough, in connection with one of the wires, to ignite the charge. The engineer was ordered to solve this problem. He did so, but forgot to have the shaft filled up when his task was completed.'

'It will have to be the scene of our action,' said Maggie; at the same time pointing to Mrs. Whiler, and adding, 'Let her go this afternoon, and pave the way for our visit to-morrow.'

'Do you consent?' said Sullivan.

'Anything for the good of the cause,' replied Mrs. Whiler.

And arrangements were made that the innkeeper's wife should carry out her share in the plot, and that the Fenians should leave the Shamrock that same evening, ostensibly for London, but practically for the deck of the little brig.





CHAPTER VII.

THE Review at Wimbledon having proved a success, the Members of the Cabinet began to feel a little more secure.

Their General in Ireland, however, was still in great difficulties. He could only receive his provisions and supplies through the Tunnel, and was, moreover, surrounded by foes on all sides; but, at the same time, the position he held was good, and he had rendered it almost impregnable by earth-works. If he was not strong enough to attack the Irish, they were not powerful enough to advance upon him with any hope of success.

On three occasions, when Lord Saxborough had ventured to attack the enemy, he had been obliged to retire, after leaving a considerable number of his men dead upon the battlefield.

American reinforcements were daily expected in Ireland, and the English ships were engaged in bringing back British troops from Hindostan, and could not therefore interfere with the movements of the American cruisers.

Mr. Cumbermore was not openly at war with the United States, but the United States were acting towards England in a very unfriendly manner.

If Lord Saxborough could hold out until the English troops arrived from India, it would enable him to increase his force by some thirty thousand men. This was pre-supposing that Metrale's force would be able to resist Lord Cromer's

advance upon London, which was daily expected.

Lord Cromer had not been able to carry out his intentions as speedily as he had anticipated. There were considerable difficulties in procuring transport; and not only that, but in ensuring discipline. At the outset of the campaign, Lord Cromer felt that it would be necessary to treat his men exactly as if they were regular troops. Acting upon this determination, he allowed no night-roistering, no singing after roll-call, or any other kind of levity; and on two occasions very severe punishments had been inflicted upon some soldiers who had taken some poultry from a neighbouring farm. Lord Cromer had stated at the time that the sentence passed by court-martial was light, but that in future no mercy would be shown.

Sir Richard Digby proved to be in-

valuable to his uncle. From his long experience in India and in many parts of the globe, the Baronet could put his hand to most things. Besides being a very good cavalry officer, he understood infantry drill, and knew a good deal about gunnery and engineering. The Volunteer officers were deficient in these very things; each man being fairly instructed in his own art, but knowing little of the other branches of the service. Hence Digby had organized a military railway corps, to retake the railway should it fall into the hands of the enemy; he had, moreover, formed a telegraph corps, and a body of signallers and travelling pointsmen, and had organized a system for sending round ammunition to the soldiers while under fire. As an experienced officer, he felt the importance of not limiting good marksmen to the regulation rounds of ammunition.

The result of this action on the part of the Baronet was that Lord Cromer's army, which now consisted of nearly 80,000 men, was fairly equipped, and provided with everything a general could require, except artillery. As to cavalry, Lord Cromer had sufficient—over 4,000 Yeomanry having joined his movement. This last piece of information having reached Metrale's ears, he was very much concerned, feeling, as he did, very doubtful as to the conduct of the Metropolitan Volunteers, should an engagement take place.

A Cabinet Council had been held, and it was resolved that Metrale should seize their arms, and kill the sentries, giving it out as his opinion that it had been the work of the Fenians.

The Volunteers, however, would not believe the statement, especially as they found one of Metrale's policemen slain by

the sentry. They endeavoured to rouse the public feeling against Metrale for his cowardly action. Metrale, to prevent this, ordered his men to arrest the delinquents. Considerable rioting ensued, and shots were freely fired on both sides.

So serious were matters becoming, that many of the respectable inhabitants packed up their household goods with the intention of leaving London.





CHAPTER VIII.

IT was the height of the season. The fashionable world had commenced to give its dinners, parties, and balls, as if no great disaster was impending.

Play was higher than ever at the clubs, and the Alcibiades was forced to extend its premises on account of the increase in the number of members. The Democrats, however, were at work, and had succeeded in pulling down the houses in Belgrave Square and other fashionable retreats, and converting them into model lodging-houses for the poor. Mayfair, even, was threatened with demolition.

A great irreligious movement had taken place, inaugurated by an individual of humble origin, who publicly declared his atheistic principles, and refused to take the customary oath on being elected a Member of Parliament. A feeble opposition was raised at the time, but he was supported by the Prime Minister, and the movement gained ground rapidly.

Several young men who loved notoriety, and saw how easily this individual had acquired it, announced themselves to be, if not Atheists, at any rate disciples of the 'Know-nothing-for-certain' School. They raised subscriptions for the publication of disreputable papers, and for the building of temples where this new creed could be preached. Many leading men of Society joined the ranks, and it became fashionable to belong to the new sect. Members even of the Alcibiades Club were among

the number, led by the impulsive and imprudent Ricardius.

The movement was confined to the upper ten thousand, and did not at any time extend to the middle and lower classes of the community. The way had to a certain extent been paved by some distinguished ladies, who had not hesitated for some years past to make the questions of a future state, future punishment, the difference between soul and mind, subjects of frequent conversation. Discussions on free thought, carried on *sotto voce* even at dinners, were matters of ordinary occurrence.

Women, not content with thinking themselves the equals of men in every respect, were continually stating it, and speaking of their sex as an injured and down-trodden race. They smoked, told each other stories with doubtful morals, and why should they

not belong to the 'Know-nothing-for-certain' School as well ?

It was a great change, after the attempt that had been made by the reactionary movement of the Anglican Catholics to re-establish in the State Church an elaborate ritual, and revive the Confessional.

This movement had met with some success at first, especially when the clergy appointed as confessors were seen to be men of a prepossessing appearance. It had been remarked that many middle-aged ladies, who had not previously been conspicuous by their attention at worship, had suddenly become unable to bear the burden of their own sins, and were therefore forced to make frequent visits to the vestries of the different clergy. They found, however, in time, that it was difficult to confess everything without implicating some other person ; and the novelty having worn off,

the Confessional began to lose popularity, and retreated in favour of the 'Know-nothing-for-certain' School.

Yet it must not be supposed that by the 'new religion,' as it was sometimes called, people became more cruel or more indifferent to death; on the contrary, societies had sprung up in every direction to prevent cruelty even to animals, and it was a matter of discussion as to whether it was not an inhuman act to a horse to ride on his back. There was, besides, a great fear of death amongst people in general—much more than in the old days, when they were brought up to believe in something, and to believe in that implicitly. It was an age of change. Lady Tryington and Laura were frequent attendants at these temples, much to Blanche's grief. Arthur Belper had accompanied Lady Tryington on several occasions—more, it must be con-

fessed, to gain favour in the eyes of his friend, than for any partiality he evinced towards the sensational movement.

‘We have just returned from the New Temple,’ he once said to Blanche, ‘and Wild Thyne addressed us in most eloquent terms.’

‘I suppose,’ said Blanche quietly, ‘he told you to believe in nothing, but expected you to believe in him.’

‘It was a pity you were not with us,’ said Laura. ‘His remarks were most thrilling—even Ricardius was moved to tears.’

‘What is done with the collection?’ said Blanche, smiling. ‘I suppose you have one?’

‘Oh yes,’ replied Laura. ‘Wild Thyne says it goes towards spreading the glorious freedom of thought which is so important a feature of the new religion.’

‘Yes,’ observed Belper; ‘when Mr. Cumbermore abolished the English Church, he little thought how soon another religion would take root in the hearts of the people.’

‘Was it not better in the old days?’ said Blanche, with her sweet voice, which carried conviction to the heart of Arthur Belper. ‘Was it not better in the old days, when people went to church with gratitude in their hearts which they wished to express, than to go, as you do now, to be amused? Why not go for such a purpose to a theatre, if that is all you require? Anyhow, so long as one church exists holding to the faith of our fathers, to that church I shall go, and not to your temples, where they pull down every old faith, and call it old-fashioned, and give you nothing in its place.’

‘After all,’ said Lady Tryington, ‘Wild Thyne’s idea is not a new one. I have

heard that in China and Japan preachers discourse upon many secular subjects from their pulpits.'

'Only think of Wild Thyne preaching about the last new fashion, or æsthetics as an adjunct to faith!' exclaimed Laura, laughing.

'Well, my dear,' said Lady Tryington, 'my poor dear husband once declared that the majority of women went to church to have their dresses admired, and the men to admire them; so I think it would be a very appropriate subject.'

'I do not see, aunt,' said Blanche, with some impatience, 'how we have benefited by all the changes we have undergone. Everybody is unsettled in consequence, and in time there will be nothing and no one worthy of respect.'

After a time, Belper was conversing with Blanche alone by the window, while Lady

Tryington and Laura were trying some new music upon the piano at the other end of the large drawing-room.

‘You do not believe in this new religion?’ Blanche said, looking into his face with an appealing glance. ‘Your life is worthy of a better object.’

‘It is a noble object in life which I lack,’ he answered. ‘I have no one who would be sufficiently interested in me to care whether I ever find one or not.’

‘Are you so sure of that?’ she said softly. ‘Why, Dick is your devoted friend.’

‘Alas! he is now my enemy. We serve two masters,’ said Arthur. ‘You will not think less of me because I am obliged to fight against him?’

‘No, indeed I will not. I honour your respect for duty, and I wish you well.’

‘As well,’ he said passionately, ‘as when you gave me a white rose at Hurlingham?’

I never see those flowers but I think of that gift.'

'So slight a token of my regard for you, and of my admiration for your courage, you treat too seriously.'

'I am going this time into a more serious contest,' he said softly ; 'and I cannot go without one more token of your regard for me.'

Blanche cast her eyes upon the ground, and he could see that his words had moved her deeply. She busied herself in arranging some flowers that stood in an epergne by her side.

'When do you expect to go?' she said.

'To-night. I have received an intimation from Metrale that the Prime Minister will require my services on some important business this evening, and I am requested to be in readiness to depart at any moment.'

‘To-night?’ she said sorrowfully.

‘Yes; to-night. Will you not give me a talisman that I may carry with me for my safety in all dangers?’

Blanche bowed her head once more over the flowers she was arranging; when she raised it again, her eyes were filled with unfallen tears, and in her hand she held a small red rose. As she gave the flower to the young officer, her soft white fingers lingered for a moment in his.

‘May it bring you back in safety,’ she said softly.

Nothing more was said. It was her good-bye.





CHAPTER IX.

EUGENE'S relations with Belper were both intimate and affectionate. His education had been carefully attended to, and he could now speak English fairly well. To a natural grace of manner he added a brave and noble bearing, and on many occasions he had been greatly admired by Belper's friends.

It was raining when Belper left Lady Tryington. At the door he was met by Eugene on horseback, and a servant holding a charger for Belper to mount.

They rode off at a brisk pace, for there were but few people in the streets, and

hardly any vehicles to block the way, until they came to Knightsbridge Barracks, then the headquarters of Metrale's forces.

As they reached the entrance, a brougham drew up, and Mr. Cumbermore and the Chief of the Police stepped out of the carriage.

'This is fortunate; we were in search of you,' said Mr. Cumbermore, shaking Belper by the hand.

'Come to my quarters—we can talk there undisturbed.'

They proceeded to Captain Belper's rooms without delay, and having each of them lit a cigar, began to discuss the situation.

'Now is the time,' said the Prime Minister, 'we need a loyal and devoted man—one who will risk his life for our cause, if necessary. Are you such a man?'

‘Undoubtedly; I hold my life of little value, if it can be devoted to the State. What is it you require me to do?’

‘Cromer has commenced his march,’ said the Prime Minister. ‘We had the news two hours ago. He finds it impossible to utilize the railway, as our men have destroyed so many bridges that it would take his railway corps too long a time to replace them. Now, his force will take at least ten days to reach London, and in fact longer, if I succeed in embarrassing his movements as I intend to do. We have therefore sufficient time to withdraw the troops from Ireland.’

‘Has it occurred to you,’ said Belper, ‘that if Saxborough commences to retire from his position through the Tunnel, the Irish can let in the water and drown the troops? The sea, with its tremendous weight and pressure, would fill the Tunnel

much more rapidly than a train could pass through it.'

'I have thought of that,' said the Prime Minister; 'and we have determined to leave three battalions entrenched at the mouth of the Tunnel, with orders not to move till five hours after the other troops have started. After that, they may retire, and must run the risk of the enemy discovering their movements.'

'But what part am I to play in this business?' inquired Arthur Belper.

'We want you,' said the Prime Minister, fixing his eyes upon Belper's countenance — 'we want you to take the heat and burden of the affair. Your battalion is in a most efficient state, thanks to your exertions; but your services may be more valuable to us elsewhere. In short, we want you to start at once for Ireland; take this private despatch to Lord Saxborough,

who will be ordered to place you in command of the rear-guard the day he commences the retreat. We do not deny that it involves great danger — perhaps your death—but you are the only man we can rely upon, if you give your word to hold out till the troops have reached English soil, and the five hours have expired.’

Belper realized in a moment the danger of the situation. A few hours before he would have jumped at the offer ; but now, somehow, it seemed so hard to throw away his life. The sweet words of Blanche’s good-bye were ringing in his ears, and they unnerved him, as he thought he had seen her for the last time.

‘You hesitate,’ said Mr. Cumbermore to the young officer ; ‘I will find some other brave man for the purpose.’

‘No, no!’ exclaimed Arthur, starting from his seat, and placing his fingers

between his collar and his neck, as if the former was choking him. 'No, no ; I will go !'

'There is no time to be lost. When will you start ?' said Metrale.

'Now, if necessary.'

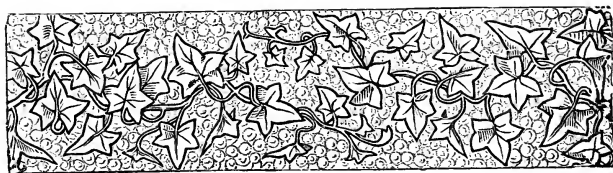
'It is now half-past four,' said Metrale ; 'the mail starts at 8.15. Here is the despatch for Lord Saxborough.'

'Thanks,' said Arthur, taking the document and placing it in his breast ; 'your orders shall be carried out to the letter.'

'We can trust you ?' said the Prime Minister inquiringly.

'My life on it,' said Belper.

'You are a brave fellow,' said the Prime Minister, taking Belper's hand ; 'you will win your reward.'



CHAPTER X.

AFTER the departure of the Prime Minister and Colonel Metrale, Belper lost no time in making the necessary preparations for his journey. Leaving Eugene to finish the work, Belper sat himself down to write a letter to Lady Tryington, in which he said that he had been suddenly ordered to Ireland, thanking them for all their past kindness to him, and expressing a hope that he would soon have the pleasure of seeing them again.

Then he sat down, and lit a cigar. His thoughts naturally turned upon the events which had so rapidly followed each other

during the last few months. He—the man who had always expressed an antipathy to matrimony—had only a few minutes before wavered, when called upon to act for his country, on account of his love for a woman. How Digby would laugh when he heard it! If he ever clasped hands again with his old friend, how willingly would he pay the £500 he had wagered upon his matrimonial prospects! As the smoke curled from his cigar into the air, he sat building castles of fancy. He thought how he would accomplish his mission—defend the mouth of the Tunnel until the troops had reached England, and then, bringing his men over in safety, he would arrive in time to defeat Lord Cromer, and intercede with Cumbermore for the life of his friend Digby.

How pleasant it would be to welcome his friend to a pleasant home, after his

marriage — his marriage with Blanche !
How sweet she would look, and how
happy they would be !

Dreams ! pleasant dreams ! And the
moments passed rapidly by as he sat in a
reverie, with his eyes half closed. The
clock on the mantelpiece struck seven.

‘ Your brougham is at the gate, Captain,’
said a servant, entering the room, and
carrying away his master’s luggage.

Buckling his sword-belt around his waist,
Belper descended the stairs, and, passing
through the courtyards, reached the gates
at which his carriage stood.

There were very few passengers by
the mail, as the difficulties of travelling
in Ireland were much increased by the
strict regulations imposed by the English
General.

The only way of reaching Ireland was
by steamers or sailing vessels from Holy-

head ; but on account of the number of ships employed by the Government in bringing back the troops from India, it was difficult to procure a passage. There was one passenger in the same compartment with Arthur, who was dressed as a minister, and who alighted at the junction for Meltingborough.

Belper avoided getting into conversation with him, although the stranger made several overtures ; and it was a great relief to find himself alone, and able to take an hour's sleep.

The train rushed onward, through districts which a few years before had been resplendent with the furnaces of factories in every direction ; but the factories were now dark and apparently uninhabited. This indeed was the case ; for since America had developed her mining and coaling industries, she had

been able to undersell England in her own markets, the result being that thousands of men were thrown out of employment, and factories were closed, and fell into ruins.

The old country seemed played out, and those who had capital took it elsewhere.

As the train stopped for five minutes at the last station but one from Holyhead, to allow the collector to take the tickets, four persons entered Arthur's compartment.

'There is only one passenger,' said a voice, which was undoubtedly Sullivan's. 'Come in here, Maggie, and tell Lambourne to make haste.'

It was the very night the Fenians had arranged to leave the Shamrock, on the pretence of returning to London. Arthur took no notice of the strangers, after the first glance ; but, covering him travelling-rug again, sank into a deep sleep. Sullivan looked at him with a

scrutinizing glance, for the officer's uniform which Belper wore attracted his attention.

‘An officer,’ he said in an undertone to Maggie. ‘See, he has a sword on the rack, and a helmet-case.’

‘Stop!’ said Maggie. ‘There is a luggage-label attached. I can read the name with ease.’

Noiselessly removing the case from the net, she held it beneath the lamp which illuminated the carriage.

‘Captain Belper!’ she exclaimed. ‘Why, this is the man who saved Eugene’s life!’

‘What strange chance has brought him here?’

In the helmet-case Belper had placed the despatch he was conveying to Lord Saxborough; and as Sullivan opened the case by means of a spring, he discovered the document.

‘What have we here?’ he said, dividing

the edge of the paper, and removing the enclosure.

‘The English troops are to leave Ireland immediately, and at all hazards. They are to return to London, to resist Cromer’s attack. The Tunnel is to be destroyed on the English side of the water, and Captain Belper is to command the rear-guard.’

‘I should not be surprised,’ he added, as he replaced the document, after having gummed the edges of the envelope where he had divided it—‘I should not be surprised if it were destroyed just a little before the time appointed.’

‘This is the man who protected Eugene,’ said Maggie.

‘We shall deal with him by-and-by,’ said Sullivan.

The train stopped at a small siding as Sullivan finished speaking. This was the

last station before descending the incline which led to the Tunnel under the sea.

The four Fenians left the carriage, and walked in the direction of the harbour.

Smoothly and steadily the train descended until it reached the mouth of the Tunnel, when the pace was perceptibly increased. The submarine passage was brilliantly lit up by electricity, and well ventilated. So easily was the journey performed, that Arthur did not recover consciousness until the train stopped at the terminus on the Irish coast. They were no longer below the water, but in a large station, filled with officers and soldiers in full uniform. The station had been selected by Lord Saxborough as his headquarters ; his lines of defence extending from the coast to a fort about two miles from the seashore.

Captain Belper inquired for Lord Sax-

borough's quarters, and, following the direction indicated, asked an officer in command of a guard whether his lordship was visible.

‘What shall I say your business is?’ asked the officer.

‘Say Captain Belper, of the 21st Dragoon Guards, is waiting to see his lordship, as the bearer of despatches from the Prime Minister.’

The officer disappeared, and presently returned accompanied by a short but dignified individual, whom Belper at once recognised as the famous General.

Belper saluted his superior officer, and then, handing Lord Saxborough the despatch, awaited his instructions.

The General tore open the envelope, without noticing that it had been tampered with, and carefully read the enclosure. The old General's brows contracted as he

did so, and in an undertone he was heard to say :

‘ Just as I had my arrangements complete for attacking the enemy—what an imbecile Government ! You are Captain Belper, I presume ? ’ said the General aloud. ‘ I see the Prime Minister wishes you to have the command of the two battalions that will form my rear-guard. I shall have to leave four battalions for that purpose. Have you ever commanded a brigade, Captain Belper ? ’

‘ Not in the field, General. ’

‘ Ah, well ! the responsibility of appointing you to so important a position must rest in other hands than mine. My orders are to appoint you to command the rear-guard. Will you breakfast with me at ten o’clock, and I shall have more to say to you. ’

Arthur, who accepted the invitation,

subsequently found Lord Saxborough to be a much more agreeable man than his first interview had led him to suppose. A strict disciplinarian while on duty, he could unbend, however, in private life, and be very agreeable.

‘You have a serious business to perform,’ said the General, as he left his presence ; ‘and from all accounts you are likely to behave nobly in the face of danger or death.’

‘I only serve my country,’ said Belper ; and as he spoke, his hand pressed the crumpled leaves of a small red rose hidden in his breast.





CHAPTER XI.

THE four Fenians, on leaving the train in which Belper had travelled from London, made at once for the harbour. Here Sullivan, standing by the waterside, made the usual signal, which was answered in a few minutes ; and the sound of oars could be heard as a boat appeared, rowed by a solitary sailor. Sullivan entered the boat, followed by his companions, and in a quarter of an hour they were all on board the little brig.

‘ There is a woman waiting to see you below,’ said a man, coming forward and touching his hat to Sullivan. ‘ She is the

wife of the proprietor of the Shamrock, and as she gave the signal, we admitted her.'

'I will see her at once,' replied the Fenian leader, leaving his friends and proceeding to the cabin.

'Everything is satisfactory,' said Mrs. Whiler, on seeing Sullivan. 'I have been to the cottage, and they are all to pay me a visit to-morrow night, and stay till the next morning. The coastguardsman himself cannot leave his work.'

'Then we shall have to use force,' said Sullivan.

'I don't know about that. I am going there to tea first, and if I have the opportunity to drug him, I will. They will not think there is anything wrong, as he always sleeps an hour after tea.'

'If you can do it, so much the better; it will save the man's life, and our own

work could be safely performed while he is asleep.'

'At what time do you propose to begin operations?'

'At about eleven to-morrow night. I shall leave Maggie here, as she will be of no use in the work we have before us. The battery can be taken to pieces, and Lambourne and myself can easily carry it, as well as the necessary cords. By about one in the morning the wires will be connected; and if the English engineering officers have done their work satisfactorily, we shall then blow up the Tunnel, and cut off Saxborough from any hope of retreat.'

'What shall you do after the explosion?' inquired the woman.

'Return here, and make our way back to London as soon as possible.'

'Have you any opium on board? It

would not do to purchase any from a chemist.'

'For what purpose ?

'For the drug.'

'No; we have no opium, but something more effective.'

Sullivan went to a small cupboard, and, opening it, produced a paper packet.

'If you can administer that, it will have the desired effect,' said Sullivan, handing her the drug. 'It is not perceptible to the taste, or poisonous.'

As Mrs. Whiler left the cabin, Maggie entered.

'I have a letter from Barry,' said Sullivan. 'He says you are to make for Meltingborough at once, and ingratiate yourself with Sir Richard Digby. He will remember you as being saved by his yacht; and you can state that you are in distress, and need his help. Then

watch your opportunity, and make use of it.'

'I will go,' said Maggie sulkily, and left the cabin.

'I wonder if she is to be trusted!' said Sullivan to himself, when he was alone. 'I wonder if she is to be trusted! Her manners are very strange—or I fancy they are. However, it would be a bad day for her if she betrayed us. You can never trust these women—they are so full of sentiment.'

At the appointed time, Sullivan and his companions appeared at the coastguardsman's cottage, in the window of which a light was burning. Approaching the casement cautiously, the chief conspirator looked through the glass, and then beckoned to his companions, who were waiting in the distance.

They could see the coastguardsman

sitting in a chair by the hearth, fast asleep.

‘All is right,’ said Sullivan; ‘come along.’

They entered the cottage, and the first thing that met their gaze was a small round table, on which stood some bread and butter and a metal teapot, which Sullivan found, on placing his hand upon it, to be still warm.

‘Now for the cellar,’ said Sullivan, taking up a lighted candle and descending a flight of steps which undoubtedly led in that direction.

They were now about twelve feet below the ground-floor, and looking round, Sullivan discovered a trapdoor, which he tried to raise. It would not, however, yield to his efforts, and, looking carefully at it, he found that it was held by a padlock. Producing a wrench, he forced open the door,

and it was then clear that they had found the well they were in search of. Fixing a rope-ladder at the top, he proceeded to descend by it, and in a few minutes his companions knew that he had reached the bottom, by the steadiness of the light he held in his hand. His accomplices immediately joined him at the bottom of the pit. Producing his plan, Sullivan directed Lambourne to dig in the place he pointed out. The soil had evidently been turned—and not very long before—and this discovery inspired the conspirators with hope. Presently a metallic sound was heard, and Sullivan placed his hand on his companion's arm.

‘Steady!’ he said; ‘be careful; you are on the pipes.’

This proved to be correct; and after scraping away some more earth, several tubes, each of them about two inches in diameter, were exposed to view.

‘Now the question is,’ said Sullivan, ‘which of the wires are connected with the mine?’

Breaking the burnt-clay tubings with a small hammer, and taking a small electric instrument from his pocket, he placed it in contact with one of the wires.

‘This is no use,’ said Sullivan; ‘it runs about ninety miles, probably to Dublin.’

As he spoke, a clicking sound was heard, and looking at a small hand on the face of his instrument, he saw that it was oscillating violently.

‘Only attend to its movements for a minute,’ the conspirator remarked. ‘Our fellows are wiring to each other over the Channel; this wire is in connection with the one they are employing, and my instrument is repeating the communications. If I could arouse their attention, I might be able to communicate with the American

General; but now to try the other wires.'

They were each of them tested in turn, and placed in connection with the battery, but there was no satisfactory result. Sullivan's face wore a troubled expression.

'Perhaps there are some other wires,' said Lambourne; and digging a little deeper, his spade again struck something hard.

'Another tube!' he cried triumphantly. 'Look, Sullivan!'

It appeared that this time they had found the object of their search.

Sullivan immediately attached the wires to his battery, and then brought the ends into connection.

'What has happened?' said Lambourne, after a few minutes' suspense.

'What has happened?' replied Sullivan angrily. 'Why, the Tunnel is not mined

at all! or the engineers have made some blunder. We are here on a false errand; and as to blowing up the Tunnel, not all the military engineers in the kingdom could do it, for there is no explosive in connection with the wires!

‘What shall we do?’ inquired Lambourne.

Sullivan did not give an immediate reply.

Detaching his instrument from the wires, he placed it in connection with the first line that had been discovered, and which by some accident touched the wire by which the Fenians in Ireland were telegraphing.

Turning the handle of his battery rapidly, he looked anxiously at the face of the instrument.

‘It is no use,’ he said; ‘the current is too slight. I shall never attract their attention.’

‘Look, the hand is moving!’ exclaimed Lambourne.

‘So it is,’ said Sullivan; and rapidly turning the handle, he commenced telegraphing to the unknown people on the other side of the Channel.

‘It must be from Dublin, and Dublin is in the hands of the National Army,’ said Sullivan.

The four letters sent by the conspirator made up the word used by the Fenians as a means of recognising each other.

They were at once answered by some passwords known only to those initiated into the secrets of the societies. He soon learnt that the operator in Dublin, whoever he might be, was as high up in the Brotherhood as himself, and in another minute he found that he was in communication with a superior.

‘What are you doing?’ was the interrogation sent from Dublin.

Sullivan explained their situation, and their intention of destroying the Tunnel.

‘Stay where you are,’ was the return message, ‘until I have communicated with General Stephens.’

‘General Stephens is the Commander of the American Contingent,’ said Sullivan to his companions.

‘The hand is turning again,’ said Lambourne.

Sullivan read as follows :

‘A battle is going on at the present moment. The English are retreating through the Tunnel. They have left a rear-guard to defend its mouth. Stephens is trying to force their entrenched position. If he does so, we can flood the Tunnel from our side, and drown the retreating army ; but if not, all we can hope for is to

destroy or take prisoners the rear-guard. Cannot you block the line and detain the leading train ?'

'We have no chance of entering the Tunnel,' replied Sullivan. 'By this time the station is full of people making preparations for the arrival of Saxborough's forces. We will, however, do our best.'

'Come with me,' continued Sullivan, this time addressing his companions. 'Pick up the tools, and cover the wires with earth.'

Sullivan led the way to the room above, where the coastguardsman was still sleeping soundly, absolutely unconscious of all that was going on around him.

'Take off his uniform,' said Sullivan to Lambourne, pointing to the sleeper.

Rapidly attiring himself in the slumberer's garments, and taking his hat from a peg behind the door, Sullivan left the

cottage, closely followed by his companions.

‘Take the battery and instruments back to the brig,’ Sullivan said, when they were outside the door. ‘I shall not require you any more. What has to be done, must be accomplished by myself alone.’

Leaving his companions, Sullivan walked to the Channel Tunnel Station. He found everyone, as he had anticipated, in a great state of excitement. The place was crowded with guards and porters, and a company of soldiers were drawn up outside the building to prevent idlers from entering the station.

Sullivan’s uniform was the means of admitting him to the platform, and approaching a guard, he inquired when the first train was expected to arrive.

‘Don’t know for certain,’ said the official, ‘but they could tell you in the “look-out.”’

There, at the end of the station, stood a

dome-shaped building with a glass roof. Since the use of electricity had become general, the railway companies, to secure themselves as far as possible against accidents, had built observatories near the principal stations, which enabled the superintendents to see at a glance the position of every train in motion. It was done in this way. A model of the line, on a very reduced scale, was constructed in these observatories, and on this model diminutive trains were placed. A current of electricity was kept up between the trains that were running and the model, the electricity being transmitted through the rails. As this was effected, the diminutive engines moved on the model in exactly the same way as the real trains were moving on the lines. The superintendent therefore could see at a glance the position of every train, and avert the danger of a collision, by himself

communicating with the guards, if necessary. This he could do by availing himself of the rails as a conductor for his battery, a similar battery being in the van reserved for the guard.

In the Channel Tunnel Railway this method had been so accurately developed, that pointsmen and signalmen had been completely superseded by an automatic arrangement in connection with the observation of the superintendent.

This official was not only able to see the position of every train, but was enabled, besides, to turn the points at the right moment all up and down the line by moving the miniature points on the model ; and by means of electricity the real points would be instantly affected in a similar manner.

Sullivan had often heard of this new invention, but he had never seen it at work ;

and as he opened the door of the observatory, he was much struck by the absence of noise, and the apparent ease with which the operator manipulated his instruments.

‘Can you tell me when the first troop train will arrive?’ said Sullivan.

The superintendent glanced at him, and then at his attire. He knew the old coast-guardsmen well, and was surprised to see a new official.

‘What has happened to your mate?’ said the man.

‘He has gone away for a week’s leave,’ said Sullivan, ‘and I have been sent here to relieve him.’

‘Do you expect anyone by the train?’

‘Yes; my brother. I thought he might be returning by the first train with his regiment.’

‘The first train to arrive will contain

the Royal Muddleborough Regiment of Light Infantry.'

'Would you let me see the train on the model?' said Sullivan.

Now to comply with this request was strictly contrary to the rules of the Company; but as Sullivan was dressed as a coastguardsman, and as the railway people were constantly brought into contact with these officials, the superintendent saw no harm in doing so.

'Well—yes,' said the official. 'There is the train.'

Sullivan followed the superintendent's finger, and he saw a diminutive train moving through the Tunnel, followed closely by twenty other trains, none of them more than one mile distant from each other, although on the model they were not more than one inch apart.

'We have had very hard work all this

evening,' said the official, in a confidential tone. 'See, all these empty trains travelling in the opposite direction are to bring back the remainder of the troops. We have had to send every available carriage.'

'How do the trains pass each other?' said Sullivan, becoming interested in the conversation.

'Very easily,' said the other. 'You see there is only a single line; but at certain places in the Tunnel we have sidings—see here! All I have to do is to touch this instrument; and as the empty trains are shunted on to the loops, the troop trains continue their journey. In another minute I shall press the spring. See, I am about to do it.'

The idea had already flashed through Sullivan's mind that here was an opportunity not to be lost.

He was alone with the superintendent of the model, and from the platforms it was impossible that the porters and guards could see them, even if they had time to look.

The Fenian felt in his pocket for a weapon. He had only a heavy-loaded pistol ; but to fire it would be fatal to his designs. The only course to pursue was to club it, and stun the man in charge of the model.

Once thought of, to put the idea into practice was the work of a moment. He brought the weapon sharply down upon the head of the unfortunate official, who fell senseless at the second blow.

Sullivan looked anxiously round, but nothing had been heard by the people outside the observatory. Fixing his eyes on the model, he eagerly watched the long lines of diminutive trains as they ap-

proached each other. They were now not more than an inch apart.

The conspirator calculated that, allowing about an inch to the mile, as the superintendent had stated, there would be a collision in a few seconds; and as the trains were travelling between thirty and forty miles an hour, the result would be fatal to those travelling in the carriages. Over and above this, the line would be blocked by the accident, and the progress of the troops rendered impossible.

With eyes keenly bent on the model before him, he awaited the supreme moment. It came at last. The two engines darted into each other. On the model, all that the Fenian could see was that the diminutive trains were stationary, whilst behind them, and at intervals of from two to three inches, other trains were approaching from contrary directions.

He was turning to leave the observatory, when his eye fell on an apparatus in one corner of the room, and a printed card was attached to the wall above it, containing instructions as to the regulation of the lights in the Tunnel.

A fiendish thought passed through the Fenian's mind.

‘Why let them see their misery?’ he said. ‘Why not put them in darkness?’ And without waiting a moment more to consider, he turned off the electricity.

Leaving the observatory without detection, Sullivan walked rapidly through the station, and proceeded at once to the coastguardsman's cottage. On arriving there, he lost no time in taking off the uniform, and dressing the sleeper as he had been attired before.

Then, in the dead of the night, while

his wretched victims were perishing under the sea, he hastened back to Holyhead Harbour and gave the signal for the boat to come ashore.





CHAPTER XII.

THE arrangements for the retreat of his army had been made with great care by Lord Saxborough. The intended movements were only known to a few of his trusted officers. The British troops had been defeated by the Americans and Irish, and Dublin had been taken by the enemy; but as the Prime Minister had declared his intention at last of upholding the authority of the Sovereign in Ireland, it was supposed that reinforcements would be sent, and the campaign carried on. Mr. Cumberland had said that there might be evils

to remedy, so far as the relations of England and Ireland were concerned, and that he would be ready to approach that question in time with a liberal and temperate hand, healing every sore and binding up every wound. Let the Irish lay down their arms, and trust to the good sense and impartiality of the Prime Minister, and then matters would come to a satisfactory issue.

Those who knew the Prime Minister best placed very little reliance on his assertions, especially the senior officers under Lord Saxborough. They had formerly served in Afghanistan and South Africa, and had some recollection of similar promises, with no results. The Government had announced long before, in the Queen's Speech, its intention of vindicating the Sovereign's honour in the Transvaal; but three successive defeats

had toned down the ardour of the Prime Minister, and he had declared that so much bloodshed was more than his conscience could bear, and he must therefore surrender the Transvaal.

Belper, who was personally acquainted with many of the officers in Lord Saxborough's force, heard these disgraceful reflections on the character of the Prime Minister with regret. Rightly or wrongly he was devoted to the cause of the Prime Minister, and to hear older officers ventilate their views in such a disheartening manner was not calculated to encourage him in his arduous undertaking. Lord Saxborough had published, in general orders, that Captain—now Colonel—Belper was to take command of a brigade of Light Infantry, and that he was to have the local rank of Major-General. At the same time it was announced that all com-

manding officers were to see that their men had an extra ration of bread and meat served out to them at seven in the evening.

The prevailing opinion was that an attack was to be made on the enemy without waiting for reinforcements. Belper, who had walked round the outer lines of defence, informed the General that it was impossible to hold out under existing circumstances for five hours with the brigade under his command, and had drawn up a plan for forming an inner line of entrenchments, which were immediately commenced at the mouth of the Tunnel. A meeting of the commanding officers was held in Lord Saxborough's tent, when the General informed them of his intention to retreat at once, and gave his final orders to Belper. He was to defend the mouth of the Tunnel at all costs, until a telegram

reached him to say that the main body had arrived on the English coast. By that time a sufficient number of trains would have arrived at the Irish Tunnel Station to convey his men back to England, when he would have to retire as he thought best.

Belper with his brigade occupied the position he had selected, at the same time covering with a small body of men the advanced lines, to induce the enemy to believe that no movement was taking place in the English camp. These outposts were to watch the enemy's movements, and report to Belper. In the meantime, train after train was filled with troops, and at 2 a.m. Arthur received the news that the main body had started for England.

It was an anxious moment. Would General Stephens attack his position before daybreak? If he became aware of the

English retreat, doubtless he would ; and then, should Belper be unable to resist the attack, the flower of the English army would perish in the Tunnel, for the enemy would be sure to flood it.

On the other hand, it was a splendid opportunity for Belper to distinguish himself, should the Irish make the attack ; and he was not without some hope that they would do so.

He walked about in the centre of the first line of entrenchments, encouraging the men with kind words, and consulting with the officers standing about.

From the first line of entrenchments, the ground sloped for about one hundred yards, and up to that distance the enemy could approach with tolerable security ; for Belper could not weaken his defending force by extending his men in a wider line. Once, however, at the bottom of the slope,

the enemy would have to sustain the full effect of the English soldiers' fire before they could carry the position.

In Arthur's battalions there were not more than 1,500 fighting men; but then they were picked shots, and to every company there was attached one of the new machine-guns which had recently been adopted by order of the Board at the War Office.

The position occupied by Belper was in form like a half-moon, the two ends pointing towards the sea, and the centre of the circumference facing the enemy's positions. The machine-guns had been placed at the two sides of the half-moon, so that its destructive powers could be brought to bear upon the flank of the enemy as well as the front.

It was as much as the three battalions could do to occupy the position; and

Belper, to his annoyance, found that he could not afford a reserve, but would have to push every available man to the front in case of an attack.

There was a second line of entrenchments about two hundred yards from the Tunnel, and they might be held, even if the first position was successfully stormed ; but should this be carried too, not an Englishman would be left alive.

The men were lying in their places behind the earthworks, wrapped in their greatcoats, and with cartridge-boxes holding 500 rounds of ammunition for pillows. They were sleeping tranquilly, and dreaming, perhaps, of wives and friends in England ; of battlefields in India and Africa ; of the day when they first smelt powder ; of the shells that had fallen in their midst ; of the incessant firing ; of the smoke and confusion ; of their dead comrades ; and of

the hurrahs that followed a successful field. There were few amongst them who had not learnt to be as indifferent to the whistle of the bullet as to the peas shot from the mouth of some truant schoolboy, and there was not an officer or man there who quailed at the peril of his position.

On the eve of a battle, officers and men—for difference of rank does not prevent the sergeant, corporal, and private from having the same thoughts as the colonel, captain, and ensign—think, many of them for the last time, of the dear old place at home, and the hearts that are beating for them, and the faces that are waiting to welcome them back.

Belper could not put Blanche's sweet face out of his mind, and the officers noticed that he walked about with his hand pressed close against his breast ; but they did not know that it rested lovingly

upon a small red rose that had been given him by the hand of a woman.

An officer, who had been sent forward with the advanced parties, was seen galloping back to the entrenchments.

‘The enemy is marching upon us in columns. Their numbers are great, but they seem indifferently armed.’

Belper looked at his watch. It was two hours to daybreak.

A few shots were heard, and it was known that the enemy were coming within range.

‘Return, if you please, sir,’ said Belper, ‘and gradually draw in your men, that they may fall back firing when they see an opportunity.’ To an Aide-de-Camp he said: ‘Take this; and desire each of the commanding officers of the two flank regiments to send forward two machine-guns.’

Belper thought that the rapidity of the

firing would make the enemy over-estimate their force. The firing became general, and it was evident that the enemy were advancing rapidly, and that the advanced parties were retiring. Belper had given strict orders that the men were to fire low, and not to waste their ammunition. The firing became incessant. The Irish brigade, which led the attack, had already advanced as far as the ground lately occupied by Lord Saxborough's encampment, the green tunics worn by the men looking quite black in the grey light of the dawn. On arriving at the open space which separated them from the British troops, there was a moment of hesitation. It was not pleasant to run the gauntlet over a rising piece of ground three hundred yards in length exposed to the fire of a concealed foe. The Fenian General, although he was aware that Lord Saxborough was

retreating, had no means of ascertaining the strength of the rear-guard of the English army. General Stephens' army numbered some 30,000 men, but they were not well armed or disciplined, many of them carrying scythes in default of better weapons ; but their hearts were in their work, and whither they were led they would follow.

Calling his officers together, Stephens ordered half of his force to attack the position on one flank, whilst the remainder attacked it on the other, the objective points being the two eminences where Belper had placed his machine-guns.

A rear-guard was to attack the position from the front, but not until the side movements had been accomplished, by which arrangement the General imagined that much of the firing would be drawn from that part of the entrenchment.

It was still dark, a sea-fog rising from the waves, which facilitated General Stephens' movements considerably, as he was enabled to advance under cover of the pervading gloom. Suddenly, to the General's great discomfiture, a piercing light was thrown on the attacking forces. Belper had foreseen that in the darkness the fire of the English soldiers would not have the desired effect ; he had therefore ordered the electric light to be turned on to its full power, thus lighting up the whole situation.

‘Curse the fellow!’ exclaimed General Stephens ; ‘but it will not do to wait.’

He gave the word to attack, and from either side the rebel battalions rushed upon the entrenchment ; now throwing themselves on the ground, then rushing forward again a few yards, directing all the time an irregular fire upon the English

soldiers. An English officer at once opened fire with the machine-guns.

‘Stop!’ cried Belper. ‘Tell him to keep the machine-guns in reserve.’

The firing became incessant ; the heavy cloud of smoke that rose in the air greatly assisting the advance of the rebels.

Already hundreds of slain covered the open space. Belper’s men, confident in their steady fire, and with an immense supply of cartridges at their disposal, were congratulating themselves upon having worked such havoc amongst the foe. Suddenly, a wild shout in front of the entrenchment attracted their attention. It came from the Irish force, as they rushed to the attack in front of the entrenchment. At the same moment General Stephens redoubled his efforts on the flank.

‘Now for the machine-guns!’ shouted Belper.

The order was at once obeyed, and the yells and cries of the Irish filled the air as they were mowed down by the new weapons of destruction. The rear, unaware of the terrible destruction amongst the advanced battalions, pushed forward to the attack.

‘By God!’ exclaimed General Stephens, ‘they are advancing in columns. If the English can sustain their fire, we are lost.’

Three times had Stephens’ force rushed upon Belper’s position, and three times the rapid fire of the English troops had raised a barricade of dead bodies between themselves and their assailants.

‘I will make one last effort,’ said the Irish leader. And placing himself at the head of some battalions that had not yet suffered by the fire, he gallantly led them to the assault.

‘Ireland for ever!’ shouted the attack-

ing force. And with wild hurrahs they darted across the broken ground. The carnage in their ranks was tremendous; but still they pushed forward under the terrific fire, until a shot struck their leader full in the breast. He reeled in his saddle, waved his sword once toward the entrenchments, and fell senseless. A moment of hesitation was apparent among his followers, and Belper, seizing the opportunity without considering that he had only three battalions, compared to the vast number of his foes, gave the order to charge the enemy. The English troops sprang from their entrenchments with bayonets fixed and rushed upon the enemy. The effect was instantaneous; for the Irish, discouraged at the fall of their leader, and at the disastrous effect of the English fire, turned and fled, and Belper, after pursuing them for a short distance, and killing

several thousands in the attack, returned to his original position.

The day was over : the fight was won. Belper discovered, to his great satisfaction, that very few casualties had occurred amongst his forces. Elated with success, Belper sat down to make a statement of the battle, and to await a telegram from Lord Saxborough to say that the main body had reached the shores of England.





CHAPTER XIII.

MAGGIE had reached Meltingborough by this time, where she heard that Lord Cromer and Sir Richard Digby had left the Castle some days before, with a large army of Volunteers. They numbered in all 50,000 men, besides a few cavalry regiments and some artillery. Everywhere Cromer's army had been received with enthusiasm by the people, and he was looked upon as their deliverer from starvation and every other evil that had followed the action of the present Government. It was well known that his movement was

not aimed against the Sovereign, but against the Government, which refused to give up the reins of power in spite of the wishes of the electors.

Maggie followed the army in a carriage, and in a few days she fell in with them. They were not forty miles from London, and they had met with no opposition.

It was night when she arrived. The streets were all illuminated in honour of Lord Cromer and his army. The General and Sir Richard Digby were being entertained at dinner by the mayor of the town.

Asking a bystander where she would find the headquarters of Lord Cromer, and finding that he had taken up his quarters at the Bell Hotel, she proceeded in that direction.

On arriving, Maggie inquired of the proprietor if she could have a room.

‘If I had twice as many rooms, they would all be occupied. I have had to

refuse even Sir Richard Digby only a few hours ago ; and he had just returned from making a reconnaissance, after being two days in the saddle.'

'Where has Sir Richard gone to?' inquired Maggie.

'To the Plough Inn—a humble but respectable little place,' answered the proprietor of the hotel; 'but he only sleeps there: he will have his meals here with Lord Cromer.'

'Thank you,' said Maggie. 'I will go to the Plough; perhaps they can accommodate me.'

She secured a room on the ground-floor, the window of which looked upon an extensive garden.

'The first and second floors are occupied,' said the landlord; 'but when the troops are gone I can give you better accommodation.'

Once left alone, Maggie threw herself down upon a sofa near the open window, and looked out into the garden.

It was a lovely night. The air was warm, and a faint twitter from some wakeful bird was the only sound that broke the stillness.

From a summer-house, only a few yards from the window, came the sound of voices after a while ; and a faint cloud of smoke would steal occasionally into the air from the cigars of the speakers.

She listened attentively, but could not hear what was being said. A glass door opened from the room into the garden ; and she could see by the moonlight a large oak-tree near the summer-house, and around the stem of this tree a rude seat had been constructed.

Opening the door as quietly as possible, she walked to the seat unobserved, and

listened again. This time she could hear the words that were spoken, and she started as she recognised the voices of Lord Cromer and Sir Richard Digby. They had been dining with the mayor, and the General, wishing to have some private conversation with his nephew, had accompanied him to his quarters.

‘ You say that you rode within six miles of London ?’

‘ Yes ; and I saw no outposts of any description ; but I heard that Metrale was at his wits’ end, trying to raise two cavalry regiments.’

‘ How did the people receive you ?’

‘ Very well ; on all sides I was asked when you would arrive before London. There is a rumour that some horrible disaster has happened to the British army in Ireland, but no one seems to know exactly what has occurred. I was so close

to London that I was sorely tempted to ride to Lady Tryington's house at Wimbledon, and learn some information that might be useful.'

'It is just as well you did not go,' observed the General. 'She is a great talker, and everybody in London would have heard of your visit in twelve hours.'

'Arthur Belper has gone over to the enemy,' said Sir Richard Digby regretfully. 'I cannot understand it, for he hates Radicalism at heart. There is a rumour that he has gone to Ireland to command a brigade.'

'Loaves and fishes, perhaps!' said Lord Cromer cynically.

'He is not a man of that sort,' answered Sir Richard; 'but I am glad he has gone to Ireland, as it will prevent us coming into collision.'

‘I wonder if he has taken that bastard with him!’ ejaculated Lord Cromer.

‘If that boy had perished, Dick,’ he continued, after a pause, ‘you would have been my heir.’

‘It is a pity, uncle; but to give the young devil his due, he is not a bastard, but perfectly legitimate.’

Maggie listened eagerly for every word that fell from their lips. They were evidently speaking of Eugene.

She knew that the Fenians had stolen the child, in order that they might have a hold over Lord Cromer, and she now learned for the first time why the lad’s life had been spared. It was evident that should they kill the boy the conspirators would be rather advancing Lord Cromer’s interests than opposing them.

‘Could you see any likeness between him and any of the family?’ said Lord Cromer.

‘Only about the eyes,’ was the answer.

‘I would to God he had never been born!’ exclaimed the General. ‘To think, Dick—to think that the child of a Parisian prostitute should inherit Cromer Castle! But it is useless to regret; and I must get back to my quarters.’

‘One moment,’ said his nephew. ‘Do you think if Cumbermore withdraws the troops from Ireland, that Saxborough will oppose us?’

‘Impossible to say, my dear Dick; impossible to say. Lord Saxborough is a good General, but he will go for the main chance. We must take London before he arrives. I shall offer him the olive-branch; and if he takes it, we can together recover our lost possessions, and lift England once more out of the mire of Radicalism and Dishonour.’

‘When do we march?’

‘To-morrow night. It will be cool for the troops, and we shall consequently cover more ground. Our next halting-place will be Windsor. Good-night, my boy.’

The General, accompanied by two orderlies who were waiting in the street, rode back to his quarters.

Sir Richard finished his cigar, and then returned to the inn. Maggie remained unobserved beneath the shadows of the old oak. She carefully watched the windows of the building, and presently a light appeared in the room adjacent to her own.

‘How fortunate!’ she exclaimed. ‘Now, if the Fates will help me this time! Yet, must I commit another crime? Ah! if these villains had not my own child in their power! But I must not stay to think, but act.’

Maggie rose from her seat, and walked to her own room. Opening a chest of drawers,

she drew out a packet of drugs. As she closed the drawer of the cabinet, she observed that the piece of furniture half-concealed a door, which led to the next apartment. Removing the cabinet, she tried the handle softly, but found that the door was locked. Stooping down, she looked through the keyhole.

Sir Richard Digby had thrown himself into an armchair, and Maggie could see that he was looking affectionately at a locket, and that his eyes were filling with tears. Presently he rose, and placed it beside his bed ; and as he might be called at any moment during the night, he threw himself upon the couch to sleep without undressing. He blew out the candle, and then settled himself to sleep.

Maggie sat silently by the door, her ears ready to catch the slightest sound. Soon the deep breathing of Sir Richard was

heard, and Maggie knew that he was asleep. He had been thoroughly tired out by his long ride.

In one corner of the room a small table had stood, which Sir Richard had moved to his bedside, and upon which he had placed a water-bottle and a glass. An idea occurred to her that if she could only obtain access to the apartment, and put the poisonous powder into the water, her work would be done. The Baronet would in all probability awake before the morning, and reaching out his hand for the bottle, drink some of the contents.

Waiting a little longer, she then opened the door of her room leading to the passage. Everybody had gone to bed, and not a sound was to be heard. Taking off her shoes, in order to make as little noise as possible, she walked along the passage and tried the handle of Sir

Richard Digby's door. It turned in her grasp, and she gave a slight push. Stealthily creeping into the room, she reached the bedside, and carefully poured the poison into the water-bottle. The only light in the room was cast by the rising moon through the uncurtained window. She looked carefully at the handsome countenance of the sleeper, and tried in vain to recall the time when that face was well known to her. Her curiosity was aroused, and she took up the locket from the table and pressed the spring.

She started back as her eyes fell upon the portrait, and clutched at the table to save herself from falling. The sudden movement awoke the sleeper. He rose instantly from the bed, and snatched the locket from the intruder's grasp. Something in the livid face of the Fenian

woman arrested his attention, and he stood rooted to the spot.

‘What are you here for?’ he exclaimed.

To his surprise, the woman showed no sign of fear, and had completely recovered her self-possession.

‘So you know her?’ she exclaimed, pointing to the portrait. ‘My own dear mistress!’

‘Your mistress, woman!’ said Sir Richard. ‘What lie is this?’

‘I am not telling a lie,’ said Maggie quietly. ‘If you will hear me, you will know that I speak the truth. If you have patience and wisdom, you will hear it from the commencement.’

The half-commanding, half-supplicating tone in which Maggie said these words struck the Baronet forcibly; and in a kinder tone than he had yet spoken, he said:

‘Go on.’

‘I am an Irishwoman,’ she began. ‘I was but sixteen when I fell in love with the chief of a secret society in Dublin. He returned my affection, and we were married. When we could strike a blow at England, we did so ; for I took up my husband’s cause, heart and soul. At last he was taken prisoner in trying to rescue others from a similar fate. He was tried in England, sentenced to death, and hanged. I was mad with grief. The priest of our parish took pity on me, and sent me to Spain, where I became an attendant in a convent. I went there with my child, and we were treated kindly by the Sisters in Seville. Gradually my health came round ; and in the quiet of the convent I sought for consolation in a religious life. One day a new nun arrived ; Sister Ursula she was called. The poor

girl was ill, and I attended upon her. I learnt from her that her suffering was mental as well as bodily. She had married a Protestant, against her father's wish. He was a stern, relentless man, and would not admit her into his house, or let her see her husband again—her heretic husband, as he called him. She was gradually dying of despair before my very eyes. I was with her but a month ; but every day our affection grew stronger, as we learnt to sympathize with each other's woes. Mutual sorrow made us sisters. One day she showed me a locket—the facsimile of the one you possess, only it contained not her own portrait, but yours. Now I know, for the first time, why your features are familiar to me.'

The Baronet had sunk into a chair, and had covered his face with his hands.

'What happened to my darling? Oh, my darling!—did she die?'

‘I cannot say,’ said Maggie, moved at the emotion displayed by this strong man. ‘She had been only a month in the convent, when one day a carriage came to the door, and her father removed her, it was said, to another convent. We heard afterwards that she was dead.’

‘Dead!’ groaned Sir Richard. ‘Great God!’

‘That was the report. At the same time, another great grief fell upon me. My child was stolen from me. I had been affiliated to a secret society, and had been very useful to its members. They still required my services. They found out where I was, and managed to send a letter to me. “Leave the convent,” it said, “and join us in Dublin.” I paid no heed to this request; and a few weeks afterwards my child disappeared. He had been playing in the garden, and was stolen in a

manner that is unknown to this day. On coming to my senses, I found another letter waiting for me. It was from the chief of the society, and he said that my child was in their possession, and that I must fulfil my compact, or he would be killed. What could I do? I left the convent; and since that time I have had blindly to obey the orders of my chief, to save my child's life. Deeper and deeper I have waded in crime, till I can sink no lower.'

Sir Richard was stupefied by the intelligence he had received. He felt faint, and reaching out his hand for the water-bottle, was about to drink of its contents. To his surprise, the woman dashed it to the ground before he could raise it to his lips.

'Stop!' she cried; 'it contains poison, and now the truth is out. I put it there

to take your life, not knowing who you were. The face of that angel saved you.'

'I understand,' he said ; 'you are still in their power ; but why have they any spite against me ?'

'They wish to strike at Lord Cromer, because he is opposing their plans ; and if he succeeds in taking London, all hope of Ireland's independence is at an end.'

'And you are ordered to destroy him as well ?'

'Yes.'

'What a horrible state of things !' exclaimed Sir Richard Digby.

'You will forgive me,' said Maggie, falling on her knees, 'and pity me, for the sake of her we both loved.'

'In heaven's name, rise,' said the Baronet, 'and you and your child shall yet be saved from harm. Come to me to-morrow, and take the post of nurse in the headquarters

of the ambulance. They will give it to you, and I can see you again. The members of the secret society will think you have obtained the situation to carry out their designs. Do not be afraid ; nothing shall pass my lips ; and before long we will punish these scoundrels as they deserve.'

'And my boy?'

'Shall be saved.'

Digby slept no more that night. After Maggie had retired to her room, he sat looking at the portrait of his dead love ; and she lived again in his memory, and in his heart.





CHAPTER XIV.

THE news of the terrible disaster to the British troops in mid-Tunnel had at last reached London.

Never in the annals of English history had such a calamity occurred before. Out of 28,000 men, more than two-thirds had perished, and no one could understand how the accident had occurred. The Railway Manager, who might have given some explanation, was still insensible. He had been found in his office, three hours after Sullivan had left the station, lying in a pool of blood. On examining the model it was found that no less than thirty of the

miniature trains were touching each other, and it was clear that some dreadful collision had occurred.

The first intimation Mr. Cumbermore received was on his return from Wimbledon, where he had been to a review of Metrale's forces. He had been anxiously looking forward to receiving some intelligence from Ireland, and was in hopes that Lord Saxborough had by this time arrived at Holyhead. He thought that the General could at once attack Lord Cromer and disperse the rebels. Metrale, anticipating this, had left Wimbledon with the whole of his force, to advance towards Lord Cromer's position, so that should this officer face round to defend himself from Lord Saxborough's troops, he could at once fall upon Lord Cromer's rear. The plan had been carefully arranged, and orders sent to Lord Saxborough at Holyhead.

Metrale, however, was entirely ignorant of the terrible disaster that had occurred, and moving forward his entire force, halted for the night at a place called Hounslow.

London was thus practically unguarded. Mr. Cumbermore had, however, caused a great number of special constables to be sworn in; and as the members of the Alcibiades Club were useless as soldiers, they were made to patrol the streets as policemen. Ricardius, who had been employed during the review, and who had no other duty to perform that day, called at the Hermitage to pay Lady Tryington a visit.

‘ Dear Mr. Ricardius,’ said Lady Tryington after she had welcomed him, ‘ what dreadful times we live in ! There is my favourite nephew, Sir Richard Digby, positively serving on the side of the insurgents ; and his great friend, Colonel

Belper, fighting for the Government in Ireland. You are the first person I have seen to-day; now do you bring any news?’

Ricardius was about to speak when Blanche entered the room, looking very pale and ill. Without noticing Ricardius she went up to Lady Tryington and said :

‘A mounted orderly has just passed the gates, and he asked the lodge-keeper how he could best come up with Metrale’s force.

In return for this information he said that a terrible accident had occurred in the Tunnel, that our army was destroyed, and that London was in a panic.’

‘Good gracious!’ exclaimed Ricardius, ‘it cannot be true; but if it is, I am better here. If you will allow me, Lady Tryington, I will take this house under my special protection.’

‘Thank you so much,’ said Lady Try-

ington ; 'but we are quite able to take care of ourselves. But do find out what has occurred, and let us know.'

The task was not an agreeable one to Ricardius, but he could not refuse, and rising from his chair he left the room.

London was in a very unsettled state. The minds of the unfortunate men who had been thrown out of work by the principles of the Government had been excited by revolutionary speeches to robbery and plunder.

The Irish had taken advantage of these doctrines for some years past, and had possessed themselves of land that belonged legally to English people ; and now the unemployed, taking advantage of the crisis, determined to commence a similar crusade, under the guidance of Mr. Bullneck. The minds of the masses since the disestablishment of the English Church had become

very unsettled, and since the upper classes had espoused the cause of the 'Know-nothing-for-certain' School, the lower classes considered they had a right to belong to the 'Share-and-share-alike' Society. Temples had been appropriated by these revolutionists for the purpose of holding meetings to discuss their proceedings ; and it was outside one of these buildings that Ricardius stopped his brougham, after leaving Lady Tryington's house to discover the state of affairs. Entering the building, Ricardius managed with difficulty to find a seat.

Mr. Bullneck was addressing the vast assembly. He spoke of the crisis, and of the advantages they would gain by it—how they could plunder the rich now there were none to protect them.

'Spare no one!' shouted the Socialist.
'We have hitherto kept our candle under

a bushel, but now we will set London on fire.'

The audience yelled with delight ; and a moment afterwards Ricardius was pushed against the wall by the crowds of frantic men, who rushed into the streets to carry out the doctrines they had been taught.

It was with a heavy heart, and forebodings of evil, that Ricardius returned to the Hermitage.

The news had by this time reached every part of London that a great disaster had occurred in the Channel Tunnel. Men stood anxiously at their doors, buying the papers that professed to give a full and detailed account of the destruction of the British army.

Ricardius bought one of these papers ; and, on arriving at the Hermitage, at once hastened to Lady Tryington, who with her

two nieces were anxiously awaiting his arrival.

‘Is it true?’ exclaimed Lady Tryington.

‘Alas ! quite true,’ said Ricardius.
‘Read here.’

And he presented the paper to Lady Tryington, who read as follows :

‘A terrible disaster has occurred. At a Cabinet Council held a few days ago it was resolved to abandon Ireland to the Irish, and withdraw our troops. Colonel Belper, of the 21st Dragoon Guards, was sent with orders to Lord Saxborough to retire immediately. The arrangements were completed for the return of the troops, and Colonel Belper was left to command the rear-guard, and defend the mouth of the Irish Tunnel until Lord Saxborough’s forces had reached the English coast.

This daring young officer behaved most gallantly. His entrenchments were attacked by General Stephens, who commanded an overwhelming force, but Colonel Belper repulsed them with great loss to the enemy. The trains, meanwhile, which were carrying the troops to England, collided with those on the way to the Irish coast, to bring back the rear-guard. Yesterday evening the superintendent who had charge of the line was found in his office, lying in a pool of blood. There is very little doubt that more than half the English troops have perished in this terrible catastrophe. To add to the horror of the scene, the electric light was found to have been turned off. Suspicion points to the Fenians, but no arrests have been made at present. A Cabinet Council is to be held this evening.

‘ Lord Cromer has reached Windsor, and

to-morrow will see the engagement between his followers and Colonel Metrale's forces. Should the Volunteers win the day, we shall witness a *coup d'état*, as Lord Cromer has determined to force the Government from Office.

‘ Consols, 27.’

‘ Thank heaven, he is safe !’ murmured Blanche, who had listened with a painful suspense while her aunt had been reading the paragraph.

‘ Colonel Belper has behaved nobly,’ said Lady Tryington.

‘ Yes,’ said Ricardius ; ‘ a splendid resistance. Just such an one as I should have made.’

In spite of her anxiety, Blanche could not resist a laugh.

Laura, who had been watching her cousin, and understood the cause of her

distress, cruelly remarked that she did not see how the rear-guard of Lord Saxborough's army could ever reach England.

'Fortunately we have friends on both sides,' said Lady Tryington. 'Dick is with Lord Cromer, and Colonel Belper stands high in the favour of the Government.'

'It never does to be too certain about anything,' said Ricardius; 'but I think Lord Cromer will take London to-morrow. And if it is to be done, the sooner the better, for Bullneck is inciting the populace to plunder. I suppose he looks upon Cumbermore as a sinking vessel, and means to desert him as quickly as possible.'

Ricardius took his leave of the ladies shortly afterwards, and drove to his club. There he read upon the tapes that Lord Saxborough had arrived at Holyhead, and

had stated his loss to be very great ; that a raid had been made by the Share-and-share-alike Society upon many public buildings and private houses ; and that there was a rumour to the effect that the Ministry would resign.





CHAPTER XV.

THE morning of the 9th of July broke clear and bright ; the sun shone down on the long lines of tents pitched in the open fields to the west of Hounslow. Lord Cromer had determined not to divide his force, but to move with all his men on London, and this was the last halting-place.

In the distance hundreds of carts could be seen bringing supplies for the troops. Some soldiers were guarding several hundreds of cattle and sheep that had been driven from farms near High Wycombe. The farmers in that neighbourhood, who

were friends of the Radical Party, had resisted at first ; but, as they found they could get a fair price for their beasts, they let them go. As long as they made some profit on their cattle, what did it matter to them whether Lord Cromer succeeded in reaching London or not ?

Lord Cromer had been up all night with his nephew, considering the situation. It was known to them that Lord Saxborough's army had been destroyed in the Channel Tunnel, and that all the opposition they could expect to meet would be from Colonel Metrale and his forces. Again, it was certain that the Metropolitan Volunteers would welcome their comrades-in-arms. Lord Cromer was aware that Metrale had passed the night in Hounslow, and that his forces had been billeted in that town. Reconnoitring-parties on both sides had come into contact a little before

daybreak, and a few shots had been fired. About 7 a.m. Sir Richard Digby was informed by his scouts that the whole of the opposing force had left Hounslow, and was marching forward for the attack.

‘So much the better,’ said Lord Cromer, on hearing the information; ‘I should have been obliged to have stormed Hounslow, and the destruction of life and property would have been great, if they had not left the place. The affair will not last long. Throw out a line of skirmishers, and deploy five regiments across the road into the fields on either side.’

It was a splendid sight to witness.

The five strong battalions that formed Lord Cromer’s first line advanced to their positions to await the enemy.

Lord Cromer was looking through his field-glass, as his attention had been at-

tracted in one direction by a sudden flash of light, like the reflection of the sun on something bright.

This was a troop of Horse Artillery, and they had taken up their position on a piece of rising-ground about a mile and a half distant. The gunners were bringing their weapons into position. The officer in command of the artillery had hoped to reach the height in time to open fire upon the Volunteers before they deployed into line. He was an old officer, but he had had very little experience in the new system of manœuvring artillery, and was under the impression that, as in his own day, gunners could go wherever the cavalry went, and that as far as pace was concerned the artillery would often have the best of it. However, he found himself almost in a trap, for the number of minutes he allowed himself to reach the rising-ground and

open fire on the Volunteers had flitted by long before his guns arrived at the place. But they were now ready for action, although time had been lost, and in another moment the flash of fire was followed by a dark cloud of smoke. The shells could be heard approaching, and the men, who had never been under fire before, felt a sinking sensation. But the distance was great and the firing indifferent, and the shells burst in a field some three hundred yards from the place where Lord Cromer was standing.

‘Send a few picked riflemen forward to fire steadily on the gunners,’ said Lord Cromer to Sir Richard Digby who was standing by his side. ‘They are very exposed, and at 1,500 yards our men ought to do their work. But see, some more batteries are on their way to aid the enemy ; by their appearance I should say they

are not regular artillerymen, but enlisted for the occasion, and if they have no skilled gunners with them they will do very little harm.'

At that moment a shell burst at about one hundred yards from where the General stood.

'He has nearly got the range,' said Lord Cromer, 'and the next shell will probably do some damage. Take two regiments of cavalry, Dick, and make a feint, as if you were trying to get round Metrale's men on the right flank, and send another officer with two more regiments to make a similar movement on the left flank.'

The Volunteers received the artillery fire with more coolness than Lord Cromer had imagined. So far, but little damage had been done by the shells, only four men having been slightly wounded by some

fragments. The picked marksmen, who at 1,200 yards range were firing upon the gunners, had brought down their men admirably, and the Captain of the artillery, who was short of capable gunners, began to lose his head. Metrale, who was endeavouring to keep his men to their work, was shot through the right arm, and a few minutes afterwards was struck in the chest by another bullet. He would have fallen from his horse but for Eugene, who supported him until a surgeon arrived, who had him lifted from his horse very carefully and placed upon the ground. The surgeon took a handkerchief from his pocket, and placed it over Metrale's face ; then, turning to the bearers of the body, he said :

‘ Let no one see him ; he is dead.’

They endeavoured to conceal the loss of their leader, but it was useless. The report

spread with alarming rapidity, and a feeling of discouragement was at once apparent. But still they held to their position, though their heart was not in their work, and though their countrymen dropped one by one under the destructive fire of Lord Cromer's rifles.

Suddenly a voice was heard to exclaim, 'The enemy is behind us!' No one ever knew who uttered that cry; but it produced a panic, and throwing down their arms they fled in every direction. They had seen Digby's movement upon their right and left flank, and were convinced that unless they instantly fled their line of retreat would be cut off.

Eugene knelt over the body of his fallen leader and friend, for since Belper had been in Ireland the lad had been invariably at Metrale's side.

Lord Cromer with his men were fast

advancing, but one of the skirmishers who was suffering from a wound, and who arrived first upon the scene, kicked the body of Metrale as it lay upon the ground. Maddened with rage at the cowardly act, Eugene rushed back a few yards, and picking up a rifle, discharged it at the man. The bullet missed its aim, but a dull thud announced that it had found a billet close at hand. In an instant twenty rifles were levelled at the lad, who, throwing down his weapon, stood erect and undaunted. Had it not been for Sir Richard Digby, who immediately recognised the boy, and commanded the soldiers not to fire, Eugene would in a moment have been killed. A cry arose for his immediate execution. 'He has shot the General!'

'Shot the General!' exclaimed Sir Richard Digby, and giving the boy into the charge of another officer, he galloped

back to Lord Cromer, who was in the arms of a surgeon.

‘Is it serious?’ said Digby hastily.

‘Fortunately, not very ; but his lordship must be kept very quiet. I am afraid of fever.’

After a time, Lord Cromer recovered consciousness, and insisted upon having Eugene brought to him.

The accusation brought against him was that he had been lying down, and feigning to be dead, at the time the skirmishers arrived.

‘Let him be shot!’ cried the soldiers.

‘No ; let him have a fair trial,’ said Lord Cromer to his officers.

There was now nothing to prevent Lord Cromer entering London.

He had given Sir Richard Digby plenary power to act in his stead. It was the moment when a firm hand was required

at the head of affairs. Judging from the reports in the papers, London was in the hands of a mob, who, incited to rebellion by Socialistic leaders, were plundering every place that was worth the sacking.

The Prime Minister's house had even been robbed, and it was reported that Windsor Castle had been spoken of as their next place of pillage. Fires had broken out in several places in the metropolis, and in several instances the insurgents had prevented the firemen from extinguishing the flames.

It was said that the Ministers had officially resigned, but of this report there was no certainty.

Sir Richard Digby determined to march 10,000 men to Wimbledon the following morning, and then enter London with an escort of two yeomanry squadrons, and ascertain if a Government existed.

If Mr. Cumbermore could not be found, the Baronet intended to proclaim martial law in the metropolis ; and placing his services at the disposal of the Sovereign, to await the Monarch's commands. Finally, he ordered a court-martial to assemble within twenty-four hours to try Eugene.





CHAPTER XVI.

IT was the eve of the battle of Hounslow. Council after Council had been held by the Cabinet. The members of the Government had learnt the news of the disaster to Lord Saxborough's forces. Everywhere they heard themselves denounced. Mr. Cumbermore could no longer meet his colleagues in Downing Street with safety. It was necessary to find some spot where they could assemble in secret. Sir Charles Able, who was as unpopular as his colleagues, placed a house belonging to his brother at the Minister's disposal. Here they were assem-

bled on the night before the battle in which Metrale was slain, and his forces defeated.

‘It is our last chance,’ Mr. Cumbermore said to his friends. ‘If Metrale is beaten to-morrow, we must escape as fast as possible, and throw up the sponge.’

‘We ought to have done so long ago,’ said Sir Poplar Burlyman. And the other members of the Cabinet spoke in the same vein.

The Prime Minister felt this acutely ; it was true that he had been the most resolute of them all against a dissolution ; but had they not all supported him ? It was base ingratitude to throw all the onus upon him, especially when retribution was treading upon their heels. He felt much as his namesake the prophet had done thousands of years before, when in the arms of the sailors and about to be cast into the sea.

‘It is no use talking of the past,’ said Mr. Cumbermore; ‘let bygones be bygones. The question we have to consider is, whether we shall now resign or await the issue of to-morrow’s battle. If Metrale wins the day, this Volunteer movement will collapse like a pack of cards. We should have to hang Cromer and one or two of the leaders. Then, with Saxborough’s remaining forces, we could easily establish order in England and Scotland; for that is all that remains of the British Empire.’

‘It is a terrible thing to shed blood,’ said Mr. Buttertongue, with his hands clasped together.

‘It is better than having our own shed,’ said the War Minister.

‘Oh yes! oh yes! that’s true,’ replied Mr. Buttertongue.

‘London will require a scapegoat if

Metrale is defeated, and I have no wish to distinguish myself as that animal,' said the Prime Minister.

'I really don't know what would happen,' said the timid Lord O'Hagan Harton. 'I think we had better run away. Up to now we have considered our party, and it is time to consider ourselves.'

'I see by the papers,' said Sir Poplar Burlyman, 'that the populace burnt each of us in effigy last night.'

As the Minister was speaking, the tramp of many feet was heard, and the sound of many voices.

The Ministers listened.

'They have found us out. They will kill us!' exclaimed Lord O'Hagan Harton.

'Come with me,' said Sir Charles Able, as the noise became greater. 'I can take you to the roof; it overlooks the street,

and we can see what is going on without being observed.'

The Ministers followed Sir Charles Able out of the room, and up the stairs on to the roof of the building.

An immense crowd had halted before the house. In the foreground could be seen Mr. Bullneck, accompanied by Wild Thyne.

'Why, confound it!' said Sir Charles Able, 'there is Wild Thyne at the head of the rabble! It is really too bad of him, for he dined with me last week.'

'They are ringing the bell,' said Lord O'Hagan Harton, trembling violently.

No one opened the door, and the crowd, becoming impatient, burst in the portals. Some of the more active men tried to climb the high rails that surrounded the garden.

'We ought to get away at once,' said

Lord O'Hagan Harton. 'If they were to capture us, our lives would be the forfeit.'

'Come this way,' said Sir Charles Able, fully alive to the danger of the situation.

Leading the way down a narrow passage at the back of the house, he showed the Ministers a small postern gate at the side of the garden.

'That leads into the street,' said Sir Charles, in a whisper. 'Lose no time in escaping.'

'Are you not going yourself?' said Mr. Cumbermore. 'Are you going to remain here?'

'Remain here,' answered Sir Charles Able, 'of course. I am not afraid of the mob.'

'And if Metrale is beaten?' said Lord O'Hagan Harton inquiringly.

'Then I shall go to France. I have

my yacht ready, and if you like I will take you all with me.'

The offer was too good to be refused ; and having ascertained the exact place where the vessel was anchored, the Ministers shook hands with Sir Charles Able and fled.

When Sir Charles reached the front of the house, an excited mob had filled the little garden.

'Share and share alike !' cried the foremost.

'Down with Cumbermore !' cried those behind.

Sir Charles was equal to the occasion. Taking a cigarette-case from his pocket, he lit a cigarette, and then handed the case to Mr. Bullneck.

The crowd were delighted at the coolness of the young statesman, and cheered him vociferously.

Wild Thyne approached, and shook hands with his friend.

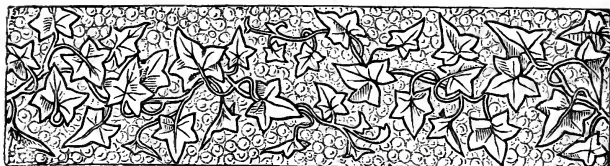
‘Say a few words to them,’ said Wild Thyne ; ‘it will have a soothing effect.’

‘He is going to speak,’ said a voice in the crowd, as Sir Charles stood at the top of the stone steps, and raised his hand to ensure silence.

‘My friends,’ said Sir Charles Able, ‘you are for sharing alike. This house, however, does not belong to me, but to my brother, and he is one of the greatest Communists in London.’

‘Three cheers for Sir Charles’s brother!’ shouted Wild Thyne.

The mob responded to the appeal with three lusty shouts ; and finding that their intended victims had escaped, Mr. Bullneck and his followers quietly left the garden.



CHAPTER XVII.

BELPER had been waiting some time for a telegram from Lord Saxborough to announce the arrival of his army in England. Twelve hours had elapsed since his lordship's departure. Arthur's men had eaten their morning ration, and there was nothing left for them in the commissariat. They had fought hard, and were hungry and thirsty. Under the most favourable circumstances, a long time would elapse before his soldiers could obtain another meal.

Meantime, General Stephens had returned to his original position. The

blockade was as strict as ever, and the young officer determined to reconnoitre the ground in person. Riding as close as he could to the enemy, he discovered, by the aid of his glass, that one part of Stephens's camp was apparently unprotected. It had belonged to that division of the Irish force which had suffered so terribly in the battle. Arthur further ascertained that behind this part many head of cattle were grazing in the fields.

It would not be difficult, he thought, to carry off some oxen in a night attack ; and it would also have another good result, as it would make the enemy less suspicious as to any attempt on his part to retire. The enemy would be rather inclined to think that the English had received reinforcements.

Returning to his camp, Belper found that no telegram had arrived from Lord

Saxborough. Leaving orders for two battalions to remain in their position, he advanced the third. Then taking all the horsemen he could muster, he led them to the unprotected part of the camp. In a few minutes they had arrived at the cattle-pens, and were pulling down the rails. The mounted men drove the beasts as silently as possible towards the English lines.

The heavy tread of the cattle disturbed a sentry, who challenged, and, receiving no answer, discharged his rifle.

Belper's horsemen redoubled their pace. It was moonlight, and the Fenians could be seen turning out of their tents and facing up in line of battle.

The officer commanding the advanced battalion, who had extended his men in skirmishing order, waited till Belper's horsemen had driven the spoil through his

line, and then gave the order to fire. The enemy, thinking this was the commencement of a general attack, made every preparation to resist it. Meantime the cattle had been driven into the entrenchments, and the advanced battalion were retiring.

Thus Colonel Belper, by a daring act, saved his men from comparative starvation, for it was not till the following evening that the trains arrived to convey the rear-guard back to England.

Belper then heard of the terrible disaster that had happened in mid-Tunnel for the first time. He commenced his retreat without loss of time, for by the aid of his glass he could see that the Fenians were strengthening their position. Belper, worn out with his exertions, lay down to rest for a few hours, while the preparations were being made for the soldiers' return.

At midnight he rose, and ordered some

dummy figures, with rifles, to be placed in the position his advanced guard generally occupied, to deceive the enemy.

The Irish General did not discover the retreat of the British forces till too late ; and within a very short time after leaving the Irish coast the rear-guard of Lord Saxborough's army reached England. At Holyhead Belper heard of the defeat of Metrale's forces, and a messenger was awaiting him with a letter from Lord Saxborough, desiring Belper to join him at Chester.

‘ Leave two battalions to help to defend the English end of the Tunnel, and join me here with the remaining battalion,’ were the instructions contained in the despatch.

And, carrying out the General's orders, Colonel Belper proceeded to Chester.



CHAPTER XVIII.

PREPARATIONS were being made in Lord ~~Saxborough~~^{Cromer}'s camp for a court-martial. Eugene had been informed that he was about to be tried for his life. The charge had been read to him, and it ran as follows :

‘On the 13th of June, 189—, and during the battle of Hounslow, he, the prisoner known only by the name of Eugene, when lying on the ground and pretending to be wounded, did discharge a rifle with intent to kill a Volunteer, and by the act severely wounded Lord Cromer.’

The court had been ordered to sit in a

large tent belonging to the staff at headquarters.

Punctually at 11 a.m. the prisoner was brought before the court. He was deadly pale, and suffering from the rough treatment he had received at the hands of his guard; but bracing himself up for the ordeal, he appeared before the officers calm and self-possessed.

The prosecutor stated his case fairly and impartially, as he believed. There was no defence; and after a short deliberation on the part of the court, Eugene was led away, having been informed that he would not know the sentence of the court until it had been confirmed by Lord Cromer and Sir Richard Digby.

Maggie had heard of the prisoner. It occurred to her that Eugene must be the boy Belper had saved from drowning. Sir Richard Digby had given orders that

Maggie was to be admitted to any part of the camp. By this means Maggie obtained access to the prisoner. Eugene thanked her for her kindness in coming to see him in his distress.

‘If Colonel Belper were here he would be able to save me ; and if you could communicate with him, you would be doing me a great service.’

‘I will try to do so,’ said Maggie to this appeal ; ‘but are there no other people interested in your welfare ?’

‘No, I have no other friends now,’ said Eugene ; ‘I had some in France, where I was educated, who would be sorry to hear of my fate.’

‘You mean at school ?’ said Maggie.

‘Yes,’ answered Eugene. And he told her the name of the place.

Maggie knew of the establishment, and had often tried to discover for herself where

it was, but had failed to do so. A suspicion had sometimes crossed her mind that her own boy had been placed there, as it was known to the Fenians.

‘Was there a boy in the school called Maurice while you were there?’ inquired Maggie.

Eugene thought for a moment, and then said there had been a boy of that name—a dark-haired boy, with one shoulder higher than the other, which had been occasioned by a fall from a ladder while playing in a garden in Seville.

‘Yes! yes!’ said Maggie; ‘it must have been my own child.’

‘Your child?’ said Eugene, astonished.

‘Yes! Tell me,’ continued Maggie, ‘he was well when you left?’

A shade of compassion stole over Eugene’s handsome face.

‘I must tell you the truth,’ he said

kindly, 'sad though it is. Poor Maurice died of bronchitis while I was at the school.'

A low moan broke from Maggie's lips, and she covered her face with her hands. She sobbed for some minutes, and Eugene offered her the sympathy he could so well bestow, and told her as much as he knew of her child's illness and death.

A knock was heard at the door shortly afterwards, and an officer entered. Maggie left the cell, crying bitterly. The sergeant, thinking her sorrow was chiefly for the young prisoner, tried to comfort her.

'It will not be to-morrow,' he said.

'What will not be to-morrow?' she inquired.

'The execution. He has been sentenced to death, and will be shot in a week's time.'

Maggie wandered about the camp,

mourning the loss of her child. Only the other day Barry had told her that if she would accomplish the last task confided to her the child should be restored.

To save that child's life she had sinned, at his direction ; and all the time the child had been dead, and the Fenian had doubtless known it.

She had been faithful to a traitor ; but now she determined to be revenged, for this cruel perfidy, on the man who had robbed her of her son, and cheated her into committing so many crimes. But first of all she was determined to save Eugene, if it could be done.

She set to work to find Belper's address, and from a Court Guide she found he resided at 517, Piccadilly.

Travelling at once to London, she found the house, but was informed that Colonel Belper was not at home ; but that he had

telegraphed to the effect that he would return the next evening.

Leaving the house, she wandered about Piccadilly, and considered what course to pursue. Then, walking to the Strand, she stopped opposite to a house in which the Fenians occasionally held their meetings. She determined to enter, and learn what she could of the future plans of the conspirators.

An old woman answered her summons, and on recognising Maggie, allowed her to enter.

‘The master is expected here presently,’ said the old woman.

‘I will wait for him,’ said Maggie ; and ascending the stairs, she entered the room where the Fenians held their meetings.

Maggie sat down in a chair, and waited. Suddenly it occurred to her that above the room in which she sat Barry slept, and, it

was believed, kept his papers in a tin box.

She walked stealthily upstairs, but found the door locked. Returning to the room below, she found a coat hanging against the door, and in the pockets she discovered some letters and a bunch of keys.

She again ascended the stairs, and tried the keys in the lock of the door.

At last she found one that fitted, and turning it, she opened the door.

There were several boxes in the room, and she lost no time in trying the keys again. Her efforts were rewarded. She found in one box a number of letters written in the French and German languages. Presently her eye fell upon the name of Eugene, and above it was written, 'Expenses for maintenance.' A few lines below this was written the name Maurice, and then came some writing in cypher.

Without a key to the manuscript her task would have been useless, so she continued to search amongst the papers, and at last found what she believed to be the necessary document.

At this moment she recognised the voice of the old woman in conversation with some person in the passage below.

Hastily arranging the boxes, she placed the papers she had found in her pocket, and descended to the other room.

‘Some of our people have left word that Barry will not be back till night,’ said the old woman, entering the room.

‘You need not say I have been,’ said Maggie, slipping a coin into the woman’s hand.

Leaving the house, she hired a small room at an hotel in the neighbourhood, and having locked the door of her apartment, sat down to read the papers. Her heart

beat violently as she read the name of her child. The date beside it corresponded with the day, the month, and the year in which her boy had been stolen. As she read the document word by word, she found that the Fenians had stolen her child to induce her to give her services to the society. There was a list of the expenses paid for the boy's maintenance, and at a certain date this payment ceased. The date corresponded with the death of her child, as Eugene had narrated.

Next, turning to Eugene's name, she saw that his expenses had been paid by the Fenians as well; and finally she read that he was to be used as a means of inducing Lord Cromer to side with the Irish.

Erremont, the name of the school, was mentioned, and the name of the town near to which it stood.

‘I must go there without delay,’ thought Maggie; ‘if I can bring the Superior back, she will identify Eugene, and with these papers I shall be able to prove that he is Lord Cromer’s nephew, and by that means save his life.’

After writing a letter to Belper, telling him what had occurred to his *protégé*, and begging him to take steps to procure his pardon, Maggie went to the Victoria Station, and in less than twenty-eight hours she was driving in a fiacre along the road that led to Erremont.





CHAPTER XIX.

BELPER did not wait long at Chester. After reporting himself to Lord Saxborough, and receiving his hearty congratulations on the gallant action he had fought when defending the Tunnel, he obtained a month's leave of absence, and returned to London.

‘You will find everything in great confusion there,’ said Lord Saxborough. ‘I should advise you to stay here.’

But Arthur would listen to no persuasion, and in a few hours found himself in London. Having changed his attire, he took horses and drove to the Her-

mitage. He found the young ladies in the garden, and as Arthur entered the gates they both hastened towards him.

‘We are so glad to see you!’ said Blanche.

‘We welcome a hero!’ said Laura. ‘I suppose you know how things are going on over here. Dick is all-powerful now, and has proclaimed martial law. The streets at night are cleared at nine o’clock for the present. The season has been quite spoiled; there are no balls or dinners, and everybody has gone out of town.’

Arthur paid little heed to this long speech of Laura’s; he was looking into the beautiful face of the woman he loved. Their eyes had met, and Blanche’s had fallen before the tender gaze of the young officer.

‘The papers say you will be made a

General,' said Laura, anxious to attract Belper's attention.

'Do not believe all the papers say,' was Arthur's reply.

Laura went to announce Arthur's arrival to her aunt, and Blanche was alone with him.

She spoke to him of Eugene.

'Eugene under sentence of death!' exclaimed Belper; 'I have heard nothing of this.' He had not opened Maggie's letter in his haste to leave London for the Hermitage. 'I must go at once and see Dick about it.'

'Do you think our influence would be of any avail?' said Blanche; 'we are so sorry for the boy, and he is to die.'

'I fear there must be some mistake,' said Arthur. 'It is very possible he may not have understood the charge, as he speaks very little English. He is a brave

lad, and I am sure would not have acted as you say, unless under some strong provocation.'

A servant brought a letter for Miss Tryington at this moment, and she opened it.

'It is from Dick,' she said; 'he is coming here, as soon as he can get away from his business, to dine with us. I must go in and answer the note; and may I mention Eugene in it?'

It was the first time she had ever asked his permission to do anything; and he took her hand gently between his own as he replied to her.

'I have kept the rose,' he said softly; 'it has brought me back to you.'

Blanche's face flushed crimson, but she made no answer.

'Are you glad I have come back?' he said.

‘Very, very glad! But now I must answer this letter.’

‘Not for a moment,’ he said, detaining her. ‘Blanche, you have twice given me what I asked you for. Each time it has been a rose. Should you refuse me if I asked for a more precious gift?’

‘What have I, that I can give to you?’

‘Yourself!’ he answered passionately; ‘your own self! Blanche, you know I love you dearer than life! dearer than ambition! Tell me—oh, tell me, I may still love on!’

She was very pale, as she heard him declare his passion, and would have fallen to the ground had he not caught her in his arms. She turned her eyes to his face, suffused as they were with happy tears, and allowing her head to fall gently upon

his shoulder, she whispered one word of consent.

‘Arthur!’

‘My darling!’

He knew that he was loved, though the words were unspoken, and he sealed the vow with one long and passionate kiss.

‘Before you reveal our secret,’ said Blanche, as they were returning to the house, ‘you must hasten to Dick, and intercede for Eugene’s life.’

The breakfast-bell was ringing as they entered the house, and before the meal was over Lady Tryington’s keen eye had detected that something unusual had occurred.

‘You will see us again soon,’ said Lady Tryington, as Arthur was about to depart. ‘This afternoon, I hope. Dick is dining with us on Wednesday, and you must give us that evening.’

‘With pleasure,’ said Arthur; ‘but I will return to you as soon as I have seen Dick, and have prevailed on him to spare Eugene’s life.’





CHAPTER XX.

IT was a busy afternoon in Pall Mall. For the last two days there had been an absence of crime and outrage in the metropolis, and a general sense of comfort and satisfaction prevailed such as had been unknown during the four previous weeks.

Martial law had been proclaimed. All delinquents had been brought before courts presided over by Lord Cromer's officers. One man had been hanged for arson, and several thieves severely flogged for violently robbing people in the streets. In each case the punishment had followed

the sentence within the space of six hours.

This method of securing order had created a panic amongst evil-doers, and had successfully suppressed the rioting and plunder. The police had—most of them—returned to the metropolis, and were being re-organized, so that they might recommence their accustomed duties, The Sovereign had issued a notice that Parliament was dissolved, and in all parts of the country preparations were being made for a General Election.

In the meantime Lord Cromer had been appointed Commander-in-Chief, with full power to maintain order throughout the kingdom by the exercise of martial law. The lobbies at the War Office were crowded with people, who all had something to ask of the temporary Dictator ; and in the absence of his uncle, who was

still confined to his bed, Sir Richard found himself besieged by applicants for appointments.

These gentlemen believed that Lord Cromer would be the new Prime Minister, and had determined to take time by the forelock.

To these applicants Sir Richard Digby had turned a deaf ear. He announced that all sinecure appointments were to be abolished, and the gentlemen were obliged to return to their homes in a very indignant frame of mind.

Sir Richard had one day dispersed all these office-seekers, and was about to congratulate himself on being able to find a few minutes to rest himself, when his aide-de-camp entered the room with some papers that required his signature.

‘There is one important document

here,' said the aide-de-camp. 'It is the court-martial on Eugene.'

Sir Richard dropped his pen. Disagreeable as had been his other work that afternoon, this was the most painful that as yet he had had to perform. He carefully read through the proceedings of the court-martial, and he saw that the evidence for the prosecution had not been in any way shaken by the prisoner; indeed, he had pleaded guilty to the charge. He had, however, stoutly denied having pretended to be wounded. The officers said that on account of the prisoner's youth they would have recommended him to mercy, but that the case was so flagrant an one that they felt it out of their power to do so.

Taking his pen up again, Sir Richard was about to write 'Approved and confirmed' under the statement of the pro-

ceedings, when a tap was heard at the door.

‘Some ladies, sir,’ said a servant, ‘who insist upon seeing you. They are accompanied by a gentleman, who gave me this card.’

‘This is terrible,’ he thought. ‘They have evidently come to plead for the boy’s life; but, at all hazards, I must do my duty.’

The Baronet rose and awaited the arrival of his visitors.

Lady Tryington entered the room, accompanied by Blanche and Arthur Belper. Digby cordially welcomed the ladies, and shook Arthur warmly by the hand.

‘We have come about a very serious matter,’ said Arthur; ‘but you know our business, I feel sure.’

‘You mean,’ said Sir Richard, ‘that

you have come to plead for that unhappy lad? It is too late!

‘Oh, impossible, impossible!’ exclaimed Lady Tryington. ‘You would never have the poor boy shot?’

‘Dear Dick! for heaven’s sake spare him!’ said Blanche. ‘Do not be hard or cruel to such a youth.’

‘God knows!’ exclaimed the Baronet, ‘I do not wish to be either the one or the other. The case is a strong one, as you can see, Belper.’

‘Yes, it is,’ said Arthur; ‘but the boy’s years should stand him in some stead. Moreover, he accuses the Volunteer in this statement of having kicked Metrale’s body, and says that the insult maddened him to such an extent that he fired without a moment’s reflection.’

‘Why did he not state that at the trial?’ inquired Sir Richard Digby.

‘He knows very little English,’ said Blanche, eager to catch at any idea that would save the boy’s life; ‘and that is a sufficient reason. Dick, you must spare him!’

‘If he were my own son——’ exclaimed Sir Richard Digby.

A servant entered again before the Baronet could finish his remark.

‘This person wishes to see you, sir, immediately.’

Digby opened a small note that the servant carried, and read as follows :

‘I have some important information to convey to you about Eugene’s parentage. Your friends must know it in time; you had better let me state my case before them.

‘MAGGIE.’

Sir Richard hesitated for a moment ;

then, handing the note to Lady Tryington, he asked her permission that the woman might enter.

‘Certainly, let her come in,’ said Lady Tryington.

Maggie entered the room, and walking to the table, whispered to Sir Richard Digby.

‘You may speak before these ladies,’ he replied.

‘I have just come from Paris,’ Maggie said, ‘where I have made some important discoveries about Eugene. I will be as brief as I can, but I must claim your patience. A few days ago Sir Richard Digby arrested me in the act of taking his life, but he spared me because I had served and loved his young wife.’

‘His wife!’ ejaculated Lady Tryington.
‘Dick, is this true?’

Sir Richard Digby bowed his head.

‘He gave me authority to go about the camp,’ continued Maggie; ‘and I saw Eugene, who told me of his early life in France. I learnt from him that my own child had been at the same school. To gain what information I could about my own boy, I went to this school and saw the Superior. I had certain proofs in my possession that she was in the pay of the Fenians, and I threatened to expose her to the French authorities, unless she told me the whole truth about Eugene. She then informed me that two children had been placed in her charge some years before, one by a Spanish nobleman, the other by a Fenian agent. She was paid handsomely for the support of the lads for some time. Then she heard that the Spaniard was dead, and that no more money would be forthcoming for the support of the child. About the same time, the boy who had been placed

with her by the Fenians died. It occurred to her that she could still receive the Fenians' money by representing the Spanish child as the one belonging to the Fenians. This was easily done, as the Fenians had never asked to see the child they had placed with her, and he had been four years at the school already.

‘Eugene, now lying under sentence of death, is the unfortunate boy who was represented by this woman as belonging to the Fenians, whereas he was really the grandson of a Spanish nobleman, and your own son, Sir Richard Digby, by your marriage with his daughter.’

Sir Richard Digby started from his chair, his face white as snow, and his bloodless lips quivering with emotion.

‘My son!’ he gasped; ‘Eugene my own son! What proofs have you?’

‘Every necessary proof,’ answered

Maggie ; ‘ and the Superior of the school is now in England, waiting to corroborate my statement.’

Sir Richard Digby sank down again upon his chair, and buried his face in his hands.

‘ There are forty-eight hours,’ he said at length, ‘ before the execution can take place. Can you establish your statements before that time ?’

‘ I can,’ answered Maggie.

A tap was heard at the door, and Sir Richard’s aide-de-camp entered.

‘ The bearer of the statement of the court-martial is waiting below. Can it be confirmed ?’

Sir Richard hesitated for a moment ; then, taking his pen, confirmed the verdict.

‘ You have signed the death-warrant of your own child !’ cried Lady Tryington.

‘ I must do my duty,’ said Sir Richard,

handing the document to his aide-de-camp.

‘Come, Maggie, if you can satisfy my mind I will go at once, and plead for mercy to the Crown. The sentence cannot be carried out for forty-eight hours, but I have no time to lose. Good-bye,’ he added to his friends, as he left the room with Maggie ; ‘pray that I may bring you back good news.’

‘Let us endeavour to see Lord Cromer, said Blanche, as they were leaving the War Office, ‘and induce him to use his influence for Eugene.’

Belper ordered the coachman to drive to the mansion inhabited by the wounded General. They found Lord Cromer’s medical advisers in attendance.

‘He is very ill,’ said Dr. Planselle ; ‘any excitement might cause his death. We really cannot allow you to be admitted.’

‘ But it is a question of life and death,’
said Lady Tryington.

‘ I am very sorry, Lady Tryington, but
we must do our duty,’ answered the
physician.

* * * * *

*(Here the original MS. ends, and the
conclusion of the story is amplified
from Colonel Burnaby's sugges-
tions.)*

* * * * *

Finding it impossible to obtain an in-
terview with Lord Cromer, Lady Try-
ington returned to the Hermitage with her
niece and Colonel Belper.

‘ We shall hear from Dick as soon as he
leaves Windsor,’ said Lady Tryington.

They had not long to wait in suspense,
for a telegram arrived from Sir Richard
Digby the same night. It was worded as
follows :

‘The Sovereign has been pleased to pardon Eugene, and Lord Cromer is quite satisfied with the decision.’

‘Now all our troubles are at an end, I hope,’ said Lady Tryington. ‘And while the country is settling down, after all these months of rebellion, I think we may as well go abroad.’

‘Oh, that will be delightful, aunt!’ said Blanche, ‘if——’

‘If Arthur accompanies us,’ added Lady Tryington, smiling. ‘Well, I have no doubt he will. What do you say, Arthur?’

‘That nothing will give me greater pleasure, if I can get a long enough leave of absence,’ replied Belper.

‘The only thing that remains to be settled is, where shall we go?’ said Lady Tryington.

It was decided, much to Laura’s dissatisfaction, that they should make a tour

through Spain, as it would enable Blanche to study the paintings of the Spanish masters, in which art she was considered to be very accomplished.

‘There was a lady in Seville, the last time we stayed there, who was really very clever with her brush,’ said Blanche. ‘You remember, aunt, I took a few lessons from her.’

‘I remember,’ Lady Tryington replied. ‘We met her first in the old Alcazar Gardens, and I was struck with her singular beauty.’

‘She lived in the Plaza de la Constitution,’ said Laura; ‘and you thought her a clever artist because she had such an elegant study. One might as well say that a book must be well written because it happens to be bound in morocco.’

It was arranged that they should leave England in less than a month; and, if

possible, Sir Richard Digby was to be one of the party.

‘I think I shall prevail on him to go,’ said Belper, as he was saying good-night.

‘And perhaps,’ said Blanche, ‘he will take us in his yacht.’





CHAPTER XXI.

THE strain of the last few months had told heavily upon Sir Richard Digby's health, and at the urgent request of his physician he consented to accompany Lady Tryington to Spain.

They had now been in Seville a week. Much of that time Digby had spent in solitude. The place was associated with the happiest days of his life—those days which he had spent with the young wife he had so passionately loved and so prematurely lost.

For hours he would stand upon the cathedral tower, listening to the faint

monotonous hum of the busy city beneath, or the bells as they pealed from the cathedral tower in honour of some Christian festival. In the distance rose the Moorish Palace of the Spanish kings—rich with its many historical associations, and surrounded by its marble courts and terraces; its olive, orange, and myrtle groves—abounding in curious remains of Moorish and Roman antiquity. Far beyond, the Guadalquivir wound like a serpent through a flat and marshy country; and on the other side of the river lay the province of Triana, the home of the Andalusian gipsies.

On every hand he was reminded of the past—that past which he had treasured so dearly, and which was ever present to him as he gazed into the fair face of the miniature he wore around his neck.

Was she dead? or was she alive? Had she remembered him through the long and

weary years as he had remembered her ? Would they ever stand heart to heart, as they had stood in the old days when silence was often sweeter than speech, and when only the twitter of the birds among the orange-trees, or the sighing of the wind through the myrtle boughs, or the liquid plashing of the fountains had broken the dreamy stillness ?

‘ How different my life would have been if she had lived ! ’ he murmured to himself day by day. ‘ How proud she would have been of Eugene ! ’

Maggie’s discovery of Eugene’s parentage had not rested solely upon the evidence of the Superior of the school at which he had been placed. A Bourbon woman, who had been in the employ of the Superior, was found, and she corroborated her mistress’s testimony, and identified Eugene as the boy who had been placed at Erre-

mont by his grandfather. Eugene was now Lady Tryington's constant companion, and the growing favour he gained in her eyes was due as much to his handsome presence as his noble disposition.

One morning at breakfast Sir Richard Digby exclaimed :

‘ I have a letter from dear old Cromer ! He wishes to be kindly remembered to you all ; and he says that he was never so well in his life, and never more able to carry out the work he has in hand. What do you think of that, aunt ? ’

‘ I am delighted to hear it,’ answered Lady Tryington ; ‘ I only hope he may not overtax his strength.’

‘ As our fair Blanche is doing with those brushes and easels,’ added Sir Richard. ‘ I wonder you do not take better care of her, Belper. There is another letter from Maggie ; she wishes me to get her a place

in the Convent of Our Saviour at Seville. Do you think it could be done ?'

'I will speak to Ursula about it this morning ; she has great influence with the Sisters.'

Sir Richard Digby started.

'Ursula !' he exclaimed. 'Who is Ursula ?'

'Oh, she is a most charming lady who lives in the Plaza de la Constitution, and who is explaining to me the beauties of Velasquez and Murillo,' said Blanche, who was painting in the shade cast by the awnings over the window.

'Oh, an artist !' said Sir Richard.

'Yes,' said Laura contemptuously ; 'only an artist.'

'Maggie adds in her letter that it will not be safe for her to stay in England much longer.'

'Why not ?' inquired Lady Tryington.

'Well, I suppose she fears the Fenians

may make a dying effort to avenge themselves on her for having exposed their vile plots,' said Digby.

'The trial of Moonlight Barry and his accomplices is at an end. They are to be hanged,' said Arthur Belper, appearing at the window.

He had been reading a copy of the *Scrawler*, and enjoying a cigar upon the balcony; and as he opened the window the fumes of his tobacco entered the apartment, mingled with the odour of tropical plants.

'Is that in Ryder's paper?' inquired Sir Richard.

'Yes,' answered Arthur; 'and here is a paragraph about the Ministers.'

'Oh, please read it!' exclaimed Lady Tryington.

'We stated in our columns last week that Sir Charles Able had placed his yacht at the disposal of the late Cabinet Minis-

ters. We are now in a position to say that those gentlemen have availed themselves of this generous offer, and have started for a cruise round the world.'

'They will be more at sea than usual,' said Sir Richard, smiling, as he lit a cigar and joined his friend upon the balcony.

'Where are you going?' said Lady Tryington to Blanche, who had risen from her painting and was folding the easel.

'I am going to the Plaza de la Constitution,' replied Blanche. 'I am not only to admire the artist's work this morning, I am to hear something of the life of the artist.'

'Very interesting indeed such a life must be,' said Laura sarcastically.

'Indeed it will be,' said Blanche; 'and knowing her to be a high-spirited, noble-minded woman, it is not strange that I should be interested in her career. More-

over, she is so exceptionally beautiful that I have no doubt her life has been one long romance. You must not expect me back till late,' added Blanche as she left the room.

'You look worried and anxious, Dick,' said Arthur to his friend, as they sat smoking upon the balcony.

There was a slight pause before Sir Richard answered.

'Who, I—I? Yes, you are right, I am anxious; this nothing-to-do life does not amuse me. I want work, the infallible panacea for an unquiet mind; and if it were not discourteous to my aunt, I should return to England and get employment from Lord Cromer. I know I could make myself useful to him in his new capacity as Military Dictator. By the way, who is this artist that monopolizes so much of Blanche's time?'

‘I really don’t know much about her. Blanche says she is a woman with a history.’

‘And her name?’

‘Ursula is the only name I know her by.’

‘I started this morning when I heard Blanche mention it; it seemed like an echo to my thoughts. You know, Arthur, that was the name of my wife.’

‘And have you never been able to discover whether she is alive or dead?’

‘Never,’ groaned Digby, ‘never. We were married, as you know, against her father’s wish. A month after our marriage we were walking together under the shadow of this very cathedral, when I was suddenly struck to the ground by a blow from behind. When I recovered consciousness I found my wife gone, and from that night to this day I have never seen her beautiful face.’

‘Did you not go to her father?’

‘Yes ; and to my surprise he appeared to share my grief, and offered to assist me in my search for her. Day and night I sought her everywhere, but to no purpose. My father’s death brought me suddenly to England twelve months after I lost her ; on my return I renewed my search, but with the same result. The only information I have ever been able to gain was from Maggie, who recognised in her portrait the mistress whom she had served in the Convent of Our Saviour. That fact the Sisters of the convent have corroborated, but they know nothing of her subsequent fate.’

‘And you still live in hopes of seeing her !’

‘Yes ; I still live in hopes.’

In the meantime, Blanche had made her way to the Plaza de la Constitution. On arriving at the artist’s house, she was

admitted into the inner court, in which a fountain was cooling the languid air with its invigorating sprays, and was then conducted through a corridor into a large and handsomely furnished saloon. It was evidently the artist's studio, for it revelled in that artistic litter which is the predominant feature of the 'workshop of the genius.' There was an anteroom adjoining, and the doors leading to it were covered by two heavy hangings, elaborately embroidered with needlework. As Blanche was examining the design of the work, the folds were thrown aside, and the artist passed between them into the room. Her figure was faultlessly proportioned, and her carriage full of grace and dignity. Blanche thought, as their eyes met, that she had never beheld so beautiful a woman.

When they were seated at their work,

Blanche noticed for the first time that the artist wore a wedding-ring.

‘ You are married !’ she could not resist saying.

‘ I am a widow,’ answered the artist.

‘ I would not like to wake any sad recollections,’ said Blanche tenderly ; ‘ but I should like to hear more of your life. It has been spent, as you say, in such singular solitude.’

‘ Not singular solitude,’ answered the artist ; ‘ for after such a loss as I sustained, it was but natural that I should wish to avoid society.’

‘ I understand,’ said Blanche ; ‘ you loved your husband.’

‘ Loved him !’ she exclaimed ; ‘ no words can describe how tenderly, how devotedly. When he was taken from me by my father and I was forced to take refuge in a convent, I thought I should never recover the

loss. The birth of our child, however, reconciled me to life, and I lived to teach him to honour and love the name of his father.'

'But how was it your husband never returned to you?'

'He was killed in South Africa. My father showed me his name one morning in an English paper, and, being in a weak state of health, the shock proved too much for me, and it was the commencement of a long and serious illness. When I recovered, another misfortune was in store for me. My child had died, and had been buried two months. Since my father's death I have lived the life you see me living to-day, patiently waiting to join those who were so dear to me, and whose memories I cherish so devotedly.'

'Have you no portrait of your husband?' inquired Blanche; 'or perhaps, if

you have, you would prefer not to show it to me.'

'I have one,' said the artist, drawing a small locket from her breast. 'I have never shown it to anyone, but you have stolen so many of my secrets from me, with that sweet face of yours, that I cannot deny you this request: there it is.'

Blanche glanced at the portrait with some interest, but as her eyes fell upon the face revealed to her, she started from her seat, pale and breathless.

'Oh, no, no!' she exclaimed; 'it cannot be; it cannot be!'

'What is the matter?' cried the artist. 'Did you know him?'

'Tell me; tell me,' continued Blanche, who was striving hard to keep back the tears that were filling her eyes, 'his name!'

'Richard Digby.'

‘ My cousin !’

‘ Your cousin ?’

Blanche fell back upon a couch, and buried her face in her hands, and her companion, forgetting her own grief, knelt beside her, and tried to comfort her.

‘ Believe me,’ said Blanche, ‘ these are not tears of sorrow, but joy.’

‘ Joy !’ said her companion : ‘ I do not understand.’

‘ Not now, but you will hereafter. Providence has led me here to restore to you all that you hold near and dear, your husband and your child.’

With a wild cry of delight, her companion threw her arms around Blanche’s neck.

‘ Then they are not dead !’ she cried.
‘ He is not dead !’

‘ No ; he lives and loves you as faithfully as you have loved him.’

* * * *

It was evening. The lamps had not been lit, and the objects in the room were only visible in outline, and assumed unnatural proportions in the pervading gloom. The air entered through the open windows, heavily laden with the perfume of citron and orange ; and without the beam of the rising moon quivered in the basin of a clamorous fountain.

Two figures stood in the twilight, clasped in each other's arms.

‘ That we should meet after these long years of pain, Ursula, my darling !’

‘ I could endure it all again, dear husband,’ she replied, ‘ to feel your arms once more around me, and your dear face close to mine, as I have pictured it during the long days and nights when I had but your picture to look upon.’

‘ My darling !’

Presently the lamps were lit, and Lady

Tryington entered the room accompanied by her two nieces and Colonel Belper. Eugene followed them shortly afterwards, and sat down beside his mother.

‘May I trouble you one moment, Dick, on a matter of business?’ said Belper, seating himself at a writing-table.

‘Certainly.’

‘What are you doing?’ said Blanche, leaning over Arthur’s shoulder.

‘I am writing a cheque for £500, dear, to settle my bet with Dick.’

‘Oh, you men are so extravagant in your pleasures!’ exclaimed Lady Tryington.

‘Never mind, aunt,’ said Sir Richard Digby. ‘The money shall not go out of the family. Ursula has decided to buy a wedding present with it for Blanche.’

THE END.

9



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